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reviewed on page 431.

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LITERATURE AND CRITICISM

The First Family of Yiddish

S. S. Prawer

CLIVE SINCLAIR

The Brothers Singer
176pp. Allison and Busby. £8.95.
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I. J. SINGER

The Brothers Ashkenazi
Translated by Joseph Singer
160pp. Allison and Busby. £9.95.
085015174

ESTHER KREITMAN

Deborah
Translated by Maurice Carr
160pp. Virago. £3.95.
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Der groyser koved, vos di shvedische akademie hot mir ongeton, iz oykh an unkeskeren fun yiddish - a loshn fun gals, on a land, on grenetsen, niht geyst fun keyn shum melukhe. With this, the first Yiddish sentence ever spoken at a Nobel Prize-giving ceremony, Isaac Bashevis Singer accepted the award for Literature as an honour conferred not only upon him as a distinguished and distinctive author, but also upon the Yiddish language; a language of the Diaspora, without a country, without frontiers, and unsupported by any state. This happened on December 8, 1978. Many years before, Bashevis's brother Israel Joshua had tried to renounce that language, publicly proclaiming that he wanted to be a Yiddish writer - only to find that the language would not let him be, that he had to return to it if he wanted to say what he knew he must. As for Bashevis (let us call him by that name, adapted from that of his mother, and refer to his elder brother as "Joshua"), he never lost his conviction that even if the majority of his readers ingested his works in translation, he himself would ever be bound to the subtly expressive language whose doom had so often been proclaimed. "When I came to this country," he said to an American questioner in 1975, "I told the editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, where I applied for a job, that I would like a steady job. He didn't see how this was possible, since I've often years 'Yiddish would be gone. Then he gave me an assignment, and it's already forty years since I asked for that job, and the paper is still there and we still have Yiddish readers and young people studying Yiddish. From a

logical point of view Yiddish should have been dead two hundred years ago. But from the same point of view not a thread should be left of the Jewish people. Just the same, here we are...

The titles of the Singers' novels and stories are so memorable that writers of biographies and critical studies are constantly tempted to adapt them. *The Spinoza of Market Street* has suggested *The Spinoza of Canal Street*; *The Magician of Lublin* is responsible for *The Magician of West 86th Street*; and now we have a new critical study which alludes to *The Brothers Ashkenazi* by calling itself *The Brothers Singer*. Ironically enough, however, the very first sentence of the first chapter reads: "Pinchos Mendel and Bathsheba had four children: Esther, Joshua, Bashevis and Moshe." There was a sister, then, and one who, as it turns out, plays a not unimportant part in Clive Sinclair's narrative. She too was a writer; and her precariously balanced (and sometimes unbalanced) personality made her an important model for such characters as the hysterical Rebele in Bashevis's *Satan in Gory*. Is it too fanciful to see in these Singer siblings, with their varied talents and constitutions, something of a Brontë constellation, with inverted genders, of course, and transported from Haworth parsonage to the family of a Polish rabbi? In that constellation Bashevis, whose imagination veers towards the strange and weird, who is ever fascinated by psychological extremes and suggestions of the supernatural, could stand for Emily; Joshua, more realistic but by no means unromantic, for Charlotte; and Esther, of course, for poor Branwell.

Whether the youngest brother, Moshe, would in the end have turned writer too and have come to take on some correspondence to Anne, it is impossible to say - the Nazi murderers cut him off in his youth along with millions of others. How exciting it would be, however, if someone suddenly turned up a long-forgotten, clearly autobiographical novel from Brannwell's hand! But, *my dear nuntants*, this is precisely what Clive Sinclair and Virago Books have given us in their re-issue of *Deborah*, the first novel Esther wrote. "Kreitman" is, of course, her married name. Her translator is her son, who changed his name from Kreitman to Carr, while the new translator of *The Brothers Ashkenazi* is Joshua's son Joseph, who

has also collaborated on versions of works by his uncle Bashevis. The Singers have the finest family tradition in modern Yiddish literature.

Clive Sinclair uses Esther's novel to excellent effect to supplement the three explicitly autobiographical works published by Joshua and Bashevis: *Of a World That Is No More*, *In My Father's Court*, and *A Little Boy in Search of God*. His own accomplishment as a novelist stands him in good stead: the Singers' parents and grandparents, as well as the four siblings themselves, become living presences as well-chosen quotations are interspersed with sparse but always telling comment. The rural and urban landscapes through which these figures move, especially in their days in Poland, are evoked with elegance and a clarity that recall the photographs of Roman Vishniac, which have obviously been studied and which rightly figure in the bibliography appended to *The Brothers Singer*. Constantly and (for the most part) unforcedly, narrated fact and topographical detail - the sandy soil, for instance, on which the family home at Leoncin was built - become symbol or metaphor in Sinclair's narrative; and this procedure not only justifies itself by its success in this biography and critical study, but can also point to precedents in the Singers' own practice. One need only recall the year in which Bashevis, in *Why the Geese Shrieked*, made the windpipes of some recently slaughtered geese serve as a test case for a choice between his father's mysticism and his mother's rationality.

Various periods of the protagonists' lives in Bilgoray, Leoncin, Warsaw's Krochmalna Street, and New York, are distinguished and related to one another in meaningful sequence and juxtaposition; their fortunes in peace and war are told vividly and economically, but always in such a way that we see their connection with the literary output which clearly prompted Sinclair to write his book. Interesting enough in themselves, the incidents of childhood and adolescence related in the early chapters gather their true significance when we are led to see them as successive stages of a literary apprenticeship. We are shown, briefly but with just enough detail, how these children of an ultra-orthodox family combined or separated out the traits of their very disparate parents and grandparents, and how three of them

became estranged from the world of their elders through contact with secular learning and literature, with Darwinism, with socialism and with Zionism. It was this estrangement, ironically enough, which saved their lives. Esther, after an arranged marriage in Berlin and Antwerp that went disastrously wrong, landed in London with her son; Joshua and Bashevis found themselves drawn to New York, where they entered the orbit of Abe Cahan and his *Forverts* and settled as professional writers and journalists.

Clive Sinclair's narrative skill serves him equally well when he introduces his subjects' fiction. Esther's first novel (the only one discussed at all) gets somewhat short shrift in *The Brothers Singer*, where it is used mainly as an autobiographical document. (This brief treatment is usefully supplemented in Sinclair's introduction to the Virago reprint.) Plot-analyses are liberally interspersed with quotations from the works discussed, and description is constantly combined - as good literary criticism should be - with implicit valuation.

Satan in Gory begins as if it were a folk tale or legend. Chmelnicki is called wicked and Gorny is described as being "in the midst of the hills at the end of the world". Instead of opening with "once upon a time" the novel starts explicitly "In the year 1648". Thus Bashevis establishes immediately his mode of working; a juxtaposition of the fantastic and the actual...

In *The Brothers Ashkenazi* history is a juggernaut, best represented by the advance of the Germans into Poland. The novel opens with a declaration of its epic intentions, even though the pioneers it follows are not Jews but Germans, en route to Poland in the wake of the Napoleonic wars. And what role did the Jews play in this march of history? As ever they were spectators, "gathered with wide open eyes to observe the interminable line of carriages moving ceaselessly forward". A century later, history was repeated as another invading army rolled into Poland and once again the Jews "gazed with astonishment in their black eyes at the newcomers". This, as Saul Bellow has pointed out, is the traditional role of the Jews. *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, like *The Manor* and *The Estate*, shows what happens

to those Jews who seize their chance and break with tradition; however, the power of this initial image already suggests their fate.

The mention of Bellow in the last quotation is characteristic; Sinclair several times throws his protagonists' work into relief by comparing it with writings by Perets, I. J. Zevin ("Tashrak"), Abraham Cahan, Henry Roth, or Nathaniel West. The same quotation also serves to indicate how successfully Sinclair relates the Singers' fictions to one another: he brings together, not only *The Manor* and *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, but also *Yoshe Kalb*, *The Gentleman from Cracow*, and *Satan in Gory*, with mutually illuminating effect. It is all done succinctly and economically, and in such a way that the reader is stimulated to exert his own critical faculties along suggested lines. Sinclair's well-judged comments on the irony implicit in the title *Khaver 'Nakhman*, for instance, inevitably lead us to reflect on other speaking names: the name "Lerner", given to the central protagonist of *Steel and Iron*, which brings into ironic play the resonances of traditional religious study that adhere to the Yiddish verb "lernen" but are absent from its English and German cognates; or the name "Soloveitchik" (=nightingale), borne by the irresistibly charming seducer in *Khaver Nakhman*.

The Brothers Singer describes very efficiently the different combinations and gradations of realism and fantasy, vivid narration and psychological probing, awareness of patterns of Jewish history and Jewish religious consciousness, which characterize the writings of the Singer family. Through its sympathetic treatment of *The Family Muskat*, *The Manor* and *The Estate*, the book also serves to counteract a prevailing tendency to dismiss Bashevis's large-canvas novels while praising his achievements as a writer of short stories. Irving Howe is the most influential critic who has consistently sought to devalue Bashevis's longer and more elaborately plotted writings; but it must be admitted that in his introduction to the new translation of *The Brothers Ashkenazi* Howe succeeds in setting that novel in the context of Yiddish fiction in a way that one misses in Sinclair's otherwise so illuminating study.

For Yiddish writers... this kind of novel did not come easily. The

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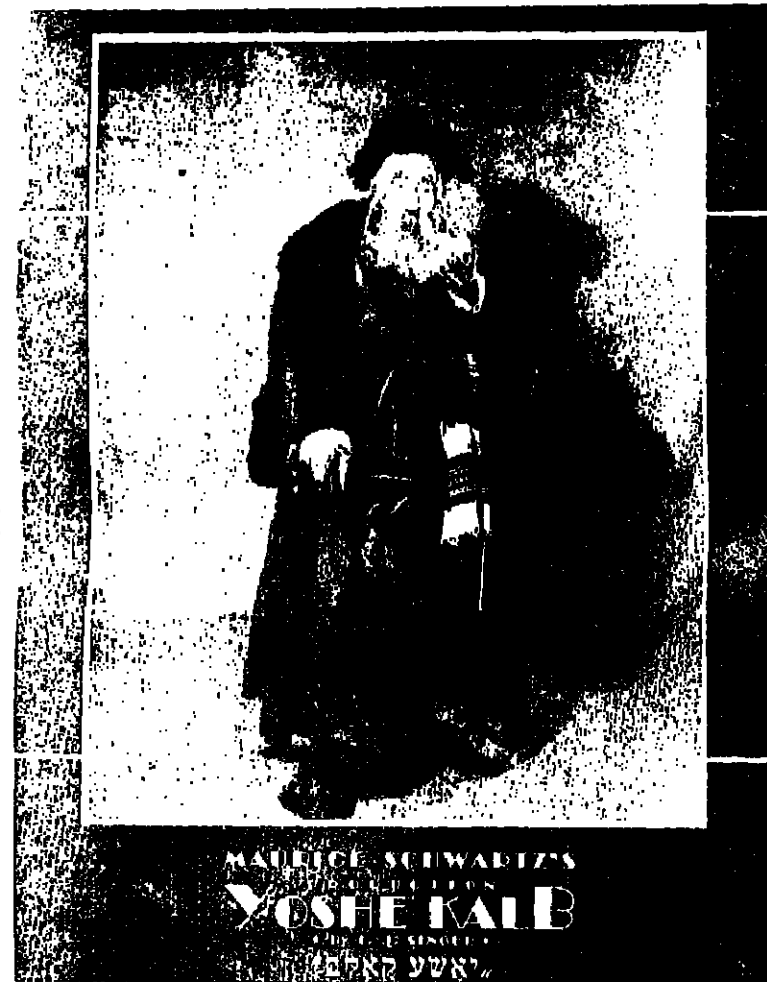
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

pioneer Yiddish "classicists" of the late nineteenth century - Mendele, Sholem Aleichem, Perez - turned spontaneously to prose fictions, as if seeking a modest form to go together with the narrow social range of the *shetl* life that was their usual setting. Only with later Yiddish writers, those coming to prominence during the first few decades of this century, did the large-scale, many-layered "polyphonic" novel begin to flourish. And this, of course, was partly due to the increasing urbanization of the East European Jews, which, in turn, brought about a more complex latticing of classes than had been possible in the *shetl*. It also brought about a new exposure to European culture, with its large variety of literary forms. The family chronicle or social novel in Yiddish... is both sign and cause of the increasing "Europeanization" of Jewish life in Poland and Russia.

Sinclair shows himself well aware of this "European" dimension; but one feels again and again that he lets slip valuable opportunities for doing his authors in a specifically Yiddish tradition. When, for instance, he quotes the revocation of Rabbi Gershom's "ban" in *Satan in Goray*, he should have told his readers something of the significance of that ban, whose interdiction of polygamy created a Western Jewish culture-area separate from that of the Near East and thus laid the foundations for the rise of Yiddish literature. When he reprinted the rhymed ending of that same novel he should surely have explained to his readers that its strange typographical layout deliberately recalls conventions of Yiddish book-making in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He might also have pointed out that figures like the grotesque Rabbi Melekh of *Yoshe Kalb* are not simple life-studies: they stand in a literary tradition that looks back to nineteenth-century satires like Linetski's *Das poyliche yingl*.

Omissions of this kind, and such eccentricities as the use of the term *misnagdim* (which seems to me neither acceptable Yiddish nor acceptable Hebrew) in both *The Brothers Singer* and the introduction to *Deborah*, will not seriously impair the pleasure and the profit readers are likely to derive from Sinclair's work. One feature of it, however, I do find deeply disturbing: that is the author's readiness to accept translations without checking them against the originals. Let us look at just a few consecutive quotations from *Satan in Goray* on pp 74-84 of *The Brothers Singer*, and compare them with the standard Yiddish text of Bashevis's novel which was re-issued in 1972 and is therefore relatively easy to obtain.

Where Bashevis tells us: "that the child Rechele would wake her grandmother and 'shake her with all her might' ('getreylt mit ale koykhes') the translation accepted by Sinclair reads: 'her whole body a-quiver'." Where the Yiddish shows Rechele starting up "from sleep" ("alk oyfgerant") drenched "with fear" ("mit angst") the English version substitutes something much less dramatic: "She awoke, drenched with sweat". Where Bashevis's original novel speaks of "waging war on heretics" ("krigt sikh mit di apikorsim"), the translator anticipates the outcome of that war: "vanquish diabolism". Where Bashevis parodies ritual phrases like "doim, vo'eysh, v'alm roys oshon" with the hideous matching triad "blit'n ayt'n in trufes mameh", his translator fobs the reader off with a monosyllabic doublet: "blood and filth". Where Bashevis understates, imputing to one of his characters the realization that the set-up in which he found himself was ganst, but pure and clean ("az di ganst zakhe is nikt kein royn"), his translator chooses something at once more direct and more high-falutin: "Rabbi Benish realized that there was evil abroad". Where the original tells us that there would be "great changes on earth and in heaven" ("v'el forkum gryflike farandrunge"), the translation reprinted in *The Brothers Singer* inexplicably offers "Earth and heaven would rejoice". Where Bashevis talks of a beard reaching down to a character's navel ("bis tsum nopl"), his translator, genteelly, makes it reach down to his "waist"; where the former has the heroine's naked body covered merely by a shawl ("shal"), the latter covers it with a "gown". We also find some unwarranted and unexplained



Maurice Schwartz (top) as the nysheve rabbi from the Yiddish Art Theatre's production of *Yoshe Kalb* (based on a novel by I. J. Singer). (Below left) Isaac Joshua Singer and his wife Genta; (below right) Isaac Bashevis Singer.

omissions: of a scriptural quotation introduced by "vi es shreyt geshribn", for example, and of a characteristically double-edged phrase which calls the frenzied population of Goray a "body community" ("fun der heyliker kehile"). What criteria did Sinclair apply when he decided to accept versions that so obviously deviate from the standard text? His readers surely have a right to know.

When Sinclair quotes from *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, he uses a leisurely, expansive English version by Maurice Samuel - a version which is now supplanted by a new rendering from the pen of Joseph Singer. The differences between these two renderings are striking - they will remind English readers brought up on Constance Garnett's translations from the Russian novelists of the shock they experienced when they graduated to nervous versions of the same novels by David Magarshak and his successors. Here is a brief sample, chosen at random: a single paragraph from Book II of *The Brothers Ashkenazi*.

Day after day the bright sun poured its light down on the broad, grain-laden fields of Poland and Russia. The prisoners' train wound its way slowly from station to station, and prisoners who could fight their way to the windows stared out hungrily at the peasants bending down as they swung their sickles, at the women and children who bound the sheaves and sang at their work.

(Maurice Samuel)

Bright, sunny days filled the world. In fields graining with grain, young peasant girls bound in red kerchiefs sang as they tied the sheaves.

(Joseph Singer)

If one now looks at the Yiddish text of the same paragraph in the Matones series edition one finds that neither of these renderings corresponds to it exactly. In two important respects the Yiddish text supports Joseph Singer: it has "the world" ("oyf der velt") instead of "Poland and Russia", and it tells us nothing about a train and prisoners: fighting their way to the windows. In other respects, it veers more towards Samuel: it has peasants cutting grain; ("zenen, poyerim geshlanten oyf geshlanten tve") as well as girls tying the sheaves. It also contains elements, however, which have no equivalent in either English version: a distinction between two kinds of grain, for instance ("korn un veyts"), and a phrase describing the sunlight playing on the girls' red kerchiefs: "yunge poyertes in royt ikhlekht oyt di kep, spindlik mit zun un likht" (my italics). One can only regret that neither the new translator, nor Irving Howe in his introduction to the new version, has seen fit to clarify this complicated textual situation.

Sinclair's and Howe's accounts of *The Brothers Ashkenazi* complement

fully in an article that does not figure in Sinclair's bibliography, has also suggested one way of resolving them: *The Family Carnovsky* is a much more complicated text than such a superficial reading reveals. Much of its complexity lies in I. J. Singer's adaptation of two paradigms, one literary, the family novel, and the other quasi-scientific, the nature of Jewish racial identity as understood by contemporary medicine. Both paradigms are presented through the medium of the fictionalized psychology of the central figures in the work. If Singer's restructuring of both the literary and the scientific paradigm in overlooked, as it has been in the past, the novel is reduced to a work of questionable value. Taken in context, the work proves to be one of the major Yiddish attempts to deal with the myth of race and its application to the stereotype of the Jew.

One may disagree with Gilman's analysis, published in *Modern Judaism* in 1981; but no one interested in the art of Joshua Singer can afford to ignore it. When it comes to *Deborah*, however, the novel by that Hinde Esther Singer who became Esther Kreitman, we find ourselves doubly in Sinclair's debt. First, because he virtually rediscovered this novel (whose Yiddish original was published in Warsaw in 1936) and then induced Virago Books to reprint the translation Maurice Carr made some ten years later; and second, because his introduction to the new reprint sets the work in such admirable critical perspective. He is right to point out



Maurice Schwartz (top) as the nysheve rabbi from the Yiddish Art Theatre's production of *Yoshe Kalb* (based on a novel by I. J. Singer). (Below left) Isaac Joshua Singer and his wife Genta; (below right) Isaac Bashevis Singer.

that there are stretches of Esther Kreitman's novel which are derivative, only half realized, "literary" in a pejorative sense; but when (as happens most of the time) autobiographical inspiration is fully at work, when the fictional digressions wear thin, this chronicle of the frustrations suffered by a sensitive, intelligent, highly strung girl within the constraints of traditional Polish-Jewish culture makes fascinating reading. Deborah's problem, exacerbated because she feels insufficiently loved, is best stated in the novel's own words:

Ever since childhood she had longed to receive an education, to cease being the nonentity of the family. She would learn things, gain understanding, and then not only would papa be a great Talmudist, not only would her mother possess a boundless store of knowledge, not only would Michael be a brilliant student, but she, Deborah - the girl who, as her father had once said, was to be a mere nobody when she grew up - would be a person of real consequence. But these thoughts were all very fine at bedtime. When she got up the next morning, she was drawn routinely and each day was like a wretched repetition of the one that had gone before it. Again she managed the home, again she assumed the burden of responsibility that weighed so heavily on her childish shoulders. She was lacking in courage and too sentimental to leave her ailing mother to get on with it; and so - without being told, without being thanked - she went back into harness again, fretting and suffering all the more for her vain hopes of freedom - freedom that seemed within her grasp.

The story of her struggles is told with a marvellous eye for grotesques, and with an admirable facility for reproducing the texture of experience, the physical and the mental together; one need only read Esther's account of

the first impact of a big city, Warsaw, on a girl brought up in the provinces to convince oneself that she is a writer of the Yiddish original; but Maurice Carr's translation reads well. If one discounts some outmoded slang and many irritating inconsistencies of transliteration. It does seem to me, however, that the title Esther Kreitman gave to the Yiddish version of her work - *Der sheydin tant* - is preferable to the bland *Deborah*. As a literal translation of *Der sheydin tant* Sinclair suggests "Pandemonium"; but that, surely, is not literal enough, for the title refers to an actual dance performed at the climax of the novel: Deborah's wedding, which was to have led to liberation but leads in fact to worse imprisonment. "Dance of Demons" or, perhaps, "Dance Macabre", might well be considered an acceptable title when the translation is revised and the novel re-issued.

Though it affords us proteptic glimpses of Bashevis's more recent work, *The Brothers Singer* does not, in detail, anything written before the 1950s. *Shosha*, for instance, and the marvellous tales for children collected in *Zlateh the Goat* and elsewhere, are not even mentioned. The book therefore supplements, but by no means supersedes, Paul Kresh's more chatty, less tightly organized and less critically rigorous biography of Bashevis which takes his story up to 1978. Published by the Dial Press in 1979, Kresh's book contains a multitude of illuminating quotations - many of them previously unrecorded - which will secure it a permanent place on the bookshelf of anyone interested in the life, work and opinions of a man for whom E. M. Forster's epitaph "Yes - oh, dear, yes - the novel tells a story" has no meaning. In an interview recorded for the BBC in 1975, Bashevis formulated his own creed as a writer with characteristic concision.



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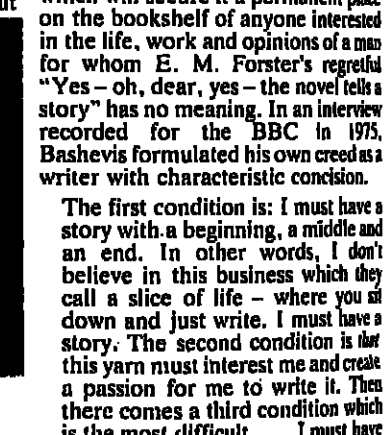
The first condition is: I must have a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. In other words, I don't believe in this business which they call a slice of life - where you sit down and just write. I must have a story. The second condition is that this yarn must interest me and create a passion for me to write it. Then there comes a third condition which is the most difficult... I must have the conviction or at least the illusion that I am the only one who can write this story. If I suspect some of the other writers would be able to do it, that would mean I'm not doing it, that I'm not really my story, it is not my personal, and I would not write it.

This is a creed to which Joshua and Esther - different though they are from Bashevis and from one another - could also have subscribed.

Sinclair's book appears at a time when the cause of Yiddish in England has suffered a grievous blow: the death of its finest poet, most knowledgeable editor, and most fervent lover of linguistic nuance, A. Stend. A new generation must now carry on the work which Solomon Birnbaum and other pioneers have so well begun. In this situation the appearance of *The Brothers Singer* is a happy portent. Its critical acuties are bound to stimulate new interest in the translations with which the book deals; and it is to be hoped that this, in its turn, will cause a clamour for the Yiddish originals which are at present so lamentably hard to come by. Bashevis, it will be remembered, often calls himself a "sceptic" - but he is never sceptical about the future of a language whose expressive possibilities he and his family have done so much to cultivate and extend. "Spinoza says in his *Ethics*", he told Sinclair in an interview first published by *Encounter* in February 1979, "that there is always something left from everything which has lived... And so I believe too that the Jews of Poland have not completely disappeared... You know, the bodies of all these people might have died, but something, a spirit, or whatever - is still somewhere in the universe. This is a mystical kind of feeling; but I feel there is truth in it, although there is no scientific evidence that it is so." Bashevis knew perfectly well, of course, what evidence he was to be found. We may discover it in the Singers' own writings; in the subtleties of communication made possible by the Yiddish language and its skill in developing literature; growing, as power to fascinate and inspire new generations of readers and writers. Clive Sinclair's welcome study serves, once again, to attest.

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Compounding error with excess

Galen Strawson

Iris Murdoch
The Philosopher's Pupil
576pp. Chatto and Windus/Hogarth
Pp. £7.95.
0 7011 2682 5

"N", the anonymous narrator, sets the scene in a "Prelude". He's a psychiatrist - perhaps a psychoanalyst. He sketches the symbolic geography and introduces his "dramatis personae" with clumsy exactitude, a small town, "N's town", Ennistown, a closed society thriving and in decline; a notorious family, the McCaffreys, originally Quakers.

A couple of numinous sites: the Ennistown Rinn of megaliths, "monstrous with unfathomable thought, and dense with mysterious authority impacted being"; and the after the 1950s. *Shosha*, for instance, and the marvellous tales for children collected in *Zlateh the Goat* and elsewhere, are not even mentioned. The book therefore supplements, but by no means supersedes, Paul Kresh's more chatty, less tightly organized and less critically rigorous biography of Bashevis which takes his story up to 1978. Published by the Dial Press in 1979, Kresh's book contains a multitude of illuminating quotations - many of them previously unrecorded - which will secure it a permanent place on the bookshelf of anyone interested in the life, work and opinions of a man for whom E. M. Forster's epitaph "Yes - oh, dear, yes - the novel tells a story" has no meaning. In an interview recorded for the BBC in 1975, Bashevis formulated his own creed as a writer with characteristic concision.

A structure of churches, of pubs (including The Running Dog and The Ratman), of good and bad districts. A quantity of characters and Characters: a madame; an ex-prostitute; a philanthropist; an unorthodox (indeed heretical) Jewish high Anglican priest, Father Bernard Jacoby, homosexual, chaste, beaurocratic. A sensitive, admiring eight-year-old boy, Adam McCaffrey, who sees what we do not see. A wide-eyed, blackish sheep with an illuminated pumpkin grin, George McCaffrey, Adam's uncle, victim of

figures of consciousness and fits of violence that seize him like imperatives of Duty. Half-a-dozen more McCaffreys, and a famous son of Ennistown returning to the house where he was born in the poor part of town - John Robert Rozanov, author of *Logic and Consciousness*, *Nostalgia for the Particular*, and *Being and Beyond*, grandson of a Russian émigré and a local Methodist girl.

George McCaffrey is the pupil of the title, a curiously marginal central figure; Rozanov is the philosopher. The "Prelude" is over, the "Events" begin: a slow accumulation of gloomy, fascinating intrigue, 550 pages of morally charged action and reaction, much of it bad-tempered or unkind, most of it foolish, ill-considered, and principally motivated by fixed delusions, narrow sympathies that continue to narrow with age, and befuddled understanding. Sometimes people do the right thing, but it's usually a matter of chance. *Phronesis* and *Sôphrosune* are in very short supply, as are the other virtues. The book seems like an extended illustration of a central thesis of Iris Murdoch's essay "The Sovereignty of Good":

one of [the psyche's] main pastimes is daydreaming. It is reluctant to face unpleasant realities. Its consciousness is not normally a transparent glass through which it views the world, but a cloud of more or less fantastic reverie designed to protect the psyche from pain. It constantly seeks consolation, either through imagined inflation of self or through fictions of a theological nature. Even its loving is more often than not an assertion of self. I think we can probably recognize ourselves in this rather depressing description.

We can recognize ourselves in this description. But can we really recognize ourselves in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, in this pessimistic, baroque, or perhaps, in this problem of excess, linguistic and emotional.

Excess is not a problem in itself, any more than exuberance is. Exaggeration and even caricature are means to truth. Realism is not the only route to reality, to accurate representation. Iris Murdoch's novels often have the essentially excessive and anti-realist structure, if not the manner, of farce - everybody in love with everybody else, coincidence the

meneur du jeu - and some of them succeed marvellously. The brilliant characterization in *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980) is enhanced by the monkey-puzzle of romantic entanglements and inevitable hopeless loves. (One's touchy sense of the unacceptably incredible is stilled by the sheer momentum of the narrative.) Iris Murdoch's novels are proof of how philosophical insight and a genius for realistic detail can thrive in the larger-than-life.

The Philosopher's Pupil, however, lacks the narrative momentum that could absorb and transmute its exaggerations. These are in part linguistic: words are used in such a way as to be weakened by their own strength; "a black vomit of sudden positive hatred... was going to spill out of his mouth onto the carpet"; "they had both lain, gripped together, absolutely motionless, in a spellbound ecstatic trance, perfectly relaxed yet also in extreme tension, in a holdingness of immense urgent power"; "her heart was all scratched and scarred and vibrating all over with a mixture of joy and pain and fear". The many triplets of uncommenced adjectives ("blissful deep happy", "intense insolent private", "provocative intent mocking"), the lists of compounded feelings ("remorse, regret, resentment, loss, anger and terrible longing", "misery, remorse, terror, agony of longing"), the ubiquitous intensifiers ("absolutely", "utterly", "perfectly", "awfully") these often risk sounding merely gushing.

This is partly unjust. Feelings do

combine into complex simultaneities of remorse, resentment, anger, and so on; the adjectival triplets often make up powerful and accurate compounds; they are uncommenced partly to represent the headlong nature of unchecked thought; and some of them are attributed to Gabriel McCaffrey, Adam's mother, whose breathless, lachrymose musings they exactly suit. But they do not work - and this is part of a general fault in the narrator. He thinks that if one rapidly accumulates individually accurate or appropriate words in the description of a thing, this can only increase the force of what one says. But this is simply not so. Descriptions can be weakened by too rapid an enrichment, collapsing into a blur or an offence against good taste.

The same sorts of excess occur when the characters speak directly and the implausibility of the intensity of their emotions. Rozanov, the saviour, cold philosopher, falls in love with his fifteen-year-old granddaughter. He wrongly tells his love; elicits hers; then argues with her that they must never see each other again, proclaiming his misery the while: "oh the pain... oh wicked, wicked, the pain of it... I'm pinned down and screaming... I'm in pain, I'm in the presence of death... I cannot tell you the hell I am in". Strong words; but the response is neither pity nor contempt, nor even astonishment; it is simply disbelief. When George speaks in a similar manner - "Oh, if you only knew how unhappy I am, how my heart hurts in my breast, it's all so black. Oh what a burden it is" - one does not disbelieve; Poor-Tom George is

capable of anything. But one is not convinced, only dismayed - the dismay of embarrassment, not of compassion.

The religious - in the largest sense of the word - themes of the book are all-pervading. According to the local folklore the town goes through periodic phases of "moral unrest". Lud's Rill, the "Little Teaser", is a favourite portent: a small, natural jet of hot water that springs up in the sands spurs of scalding water thirty feet into the air. This it does at the beginning of the book, when George tries to drown his wife Stella, then saves her himself. N comments: the "accident" was "taken by the serious-minded as an example of how pure disorder at one level can cause a fall of moral barriers at another". Strange days. Although it is more modern, more urban, less magical, although it is visited by a graceless, egotistical philosopher, not a radiant, wine-bearing angel, his master, wince, wrongly tells his love; elicits hers; then argues with her that they must never see each other again, proclaiming his misery the while: "oh the pain... oh wicked, wicked, the pain of it... I'm pinned down and screaming... I'm in pain, I'm in the presence of death... I cannot tell you the hell I am in". Strong words; but the response is neither pity nor contempt, nor even astonishment; it is simply disbelief. When George speaks in a similar manner - "Oh, if you only knew how unhappy I am, how my heart hurts in my breast, it's all so black. Oh what a burden it is" - one does not disbelieve; Poor-Tom George is

the side of the revolutionaries who would change all that. Michael Collins visits Klineagh in his motor-cycling clothes and is invited to lunch, though not given permission to use the demesne as a training ground for soldiers, since Willie's father has no wish to endanger his dependants. By the summer of 1920, a Black-and-Tan force is stationed at the nearby town of Fermoy, and the pattern of atrocity, reprisal and counter-reprisal is well established. Thomas Mac Curtain, the Lord Mayor of Cork, is murdered in his home after a group of men with blackened faces has forced its way in. Guerrilla fighters, living for the most part in dug-outs in the hills, make it their business to organize the execution of British spies, leaving explanatory placards attached to the corpses. William Trevor has appropriated one such killing for his novel: the body of an informer named Doyle, from which the tongue has been cut out, is found hanging from a tree on the Klineagh estate. More than anything else, this constitutes a source of interest and excitement for the younger Quintons.

Though he doesn't by any means discount the endemic unrest and its reverberations in the countryside, William Trevor's concern, in the first three chapters of his novel, is to show how innocent and idyllic things have been the less were - for those not oppressed by political concerns at least. We have here a world constructed with such authority and subtlety that we remember an acute sense of shock, as we're meant to, when it is abruptly demolished. An act of reprisal, instigated by a Black-and-Tan sergeant named Rudkin, is carried out. Like the house called Danielstown in Elizabeth Bowen's novel *The Last September* ("The door stood open after a long while upon a furnace"), Klineagh - one wing excepted - is turned into a ruin. Trevor makes this act an afterthought of the Black-and-Tan rampage, which he placed the centre of Cork to charred debris. There's a degree of historical irony at work here: "big houses" of the Klineagh type, the property of the Anglo-Irish, were a common target for Sinn Féiners possessed by fury against such places and what they stood for: the victims of Black-and-Tan aggression were generally humbler. (Sinn Féin, as Yeats observed, is all part of the same imbroglio: "somebody's man is killed, or a house burned, or a man is killed, or a house burned, or a man is killed, or a house burned...") What clear fact is to be discerned?

Injustice is felt everywhere, and the elder Quintons - the English mother and mill-owning father - are ranged on

his central theme, is the fact that Ireland is blighted, as surely as the potato crop was blighted in 1846, if less tangibly. To embody this idea of blight he has, romantically, the survivors of Klineagh; though the effects of their stricken condition are deferred for some time. What they're deprived of, though they don't realize it at once, is the simple freedom to choose how to live.

Life goes on nevertheless. Willie, to begin with, attends a day school run by an emotional lady called Miss Halliwell whose ill-judged sympathy offends him. The establishment in the Dublin mountains, earlier the object of so much apprehension, turns out to be a place of no great discomfort or restriction after all. Willie makes two friends here, one the son of a lemonade manufacturer and the other a would-be actor named de Courcy, and experiences no difficulty in taking on the rôle of an ordinary schoolboy, and in the usual way for hockey and adventure, and entranced by the idea of sexual escapades. The school is a makeshift version of an English public school, all seediness and eccentricity; the masters, lax, embittered, unprofessional, unseemly and obsessive, complete the picture. Actually, the school interlude comes closer than any other part of the book to William Trevor's accustomed manner, which is sedately comic rather than elegiac; the desperate situation he contrives in his earlier fiction, which is about what we remember from *Other People's Worlds*, for example, abandoned in Pisa by the bigamous rogue she took to be her husband, and subsequently pursued with amorous intent by an obnoxious Italian whose eyelid is disfigured. Unlike Trevor's earlier novels: and many of his stories, *Fools of Fortune* contains no demoted truth-tellers whose function is to expose the flaws, misbeliefs and deficiencies in people's lives; here, on the contrary, everyone contributes to the effort to bush things up.

The inadequacy of conventional safeguards against disorder - self-control, religion, family life and so forth - is also a persistent theme. Trevor shows what happens when things begin to fall apart; but the areas of corruption he explores are usually designed to entertain. Bleakness, an undoubted quality of his novels, is tempered with a rollat for oddity and absurdity which keeps the tone high.

resumed in the person of Father Jacoby, who can shift in a moment from "Silly old bitch, I hope she drowns" to the heartfelt repetition of vulgar redemptive banalities: "I preach the good news... Automatic salvation... Turn a switch and flood your soul with light." Father Jacoby doesn't believe in God, but is in love with a blond, beardless Christ. His capacity for contradiction is amazing. And yet, we understand, his portion of grace is larger than most. Fawcett, irresponsible, he has perhaps stumbled into the "true morality" of "The Sovereignty of Good": "a sort of unostentatious mysticism... a kind of undogmatic prayer".

No one sees clearly in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, no one is wise, not even the narrator: least of all the philosopher. It is a depressing work, in which a remarkable and profound psychological intelligence devotes itself to setting down in the upper-case italics of semi-gothic fiction some unattractive truths about the way we tend to treat each other. In the end, we do recognize ourselves in this description. Morality penetrates all aspects of everyday life, as Father Jacoby observes, and we do not perform very well. As the story slowly advances on its many fronts, those who are not thrown by the linguistic and emotional excesses will find themselves caught up, carried along. But this is not one of Iris Murdoch's unputdownable novels. And it is not nearly as good a novel as the novel it contains - the one that can be obtained simply by cutting, not changing, what is already there.

There is a continual and highly dramatic emphasis on the symbiotic heave of good and evil in the lives of essentially imperfect individuals. There is a fight of light against dark - of essentially compromised light against simply by cutting, not changing, what is already there.

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APRIL 1980

The misanthrope of Croisset

Harry Levin

FRANCIS STEEGMULLER (Editor and Translator)

The Letters of Gustave Flaubert: Volume 2, 1857-1880
309pp. Harvard University Press.
£12.
0 674 52640 6

"I expressed myself badly when I told you one must not write with one's heart", wrote Gustave Flaubert to George Sand, who had predictably balked at so negativistic a credo. "What I meant was: don't put your own personality on stage. I believe that great art is scientific and impersonal." Nine years later he would still be qualifying his own renunciations. He would protest that he belonged to no school, least of all "the realists". Far from lacking convictions, he had too many. But these demanded "that the artist... appear in his work no more than God in nature". Or rather, to put the gesture of self-effacement somewhat more modestly: "The man is nothing, the work everything!" Formalistic criticism could build its church upon such a substratum, whence it could excommunicate all believers in the biographical tenets. Those, however, might have included another self of Flaubert. Still arguing with George Sand, who had suggested that critics might justifiably wither away, he had momentarily envisaged another possibility:

When will they be artists, nothing but artists, real artists? Where have you seen a piece of criticism that is concerned, intensely concerned, with the work in itself? The milieu in which it was produced and the circumstances that occasioned it are very closely analysed. But the unconscious poetics which brought it into being? Its composition? Its style? The author's point of view?

This was to look beyond Sainte-Beuve and Taine, whom he classified as historians, and to entertain a prospect of formalism, for which his cult of style had prepared the ground. But "la poésie incertaine?" "le point de vue de l'auteur?" — such considerations would leave no room for the intentional fallacy or the demise of the author. They might instead have been cited as a warrant for the monstrous pseudo-biographical inquiry by Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Idiot de la famille*. Not that Sartre had the slightest use for the Flaubertian conception of the writer as artist. Yet would any other critic have expended some 2,800 outside pages on the first half of another writer's career? Sartre chose his subject, he tells us not quite candidly, because "it provided the easiest basis for answering the question: 'Que peut-on savoir d'un homme, aujourd'hui?' If he had succeeded in annihilating his victim, he would have demonstrated that "l'homme n'est rien" with a vengeance. Flaubert's favourite motto from Epictetus, "Conceal your life", spoke for his reclusiveness, his deep sense of privacy. Proust took a similar attitude in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, possibly apprehending his own biographers, even though his great novel would be a sublimated autobiography.

Both Flaubert and Proust believed that the Work transcended the Life. Flaubert would have waxed characteristically indignant at the suggestion that, in his case, something could be said for the opposite belief. To prefer his letters to his novels became a snobbish *idee reçue*, which Proust echoed though he did not agree. For others, notably Claude, the correspondence became a bible, literary and otherwise. Its special charge derives from a paradoxical combination: on the one hand unique devotion to artistic discipline, on the other spontaneous release from self-imposed constraints. Though it has long since taken a place of its own in French literature, it has waited for Francis Steegmuller to transmute it into English with the distinction it deserves. With this second volume he concludes a presentation which is necessarily a drastic selection. There will be about 5,000 letters in the authoritative Pléiade edition of Jean Bruneau, only half of which has

appeared so far. Mr Steegmuller has had the advantage of Professor Bruneau's cooperation on material covered by the two forthcoming Pléiade volumes. Moreover, his own credentials as editor, biographer, and translator, particularly in the Flaubertian sphere, are so well established that he can be confidently trusted with this delicate and demanding task.

The result is not an episodic sequence but a systematic interpretation, from the introductory "Reflections" to the circumstantial appendices, with a few well-chosen illustrations to body forth the verbal portraiture. Letters have been meaningfully selected, cut for repetitions or trivialities, strung together with running commentary, and annotated with identifications and cross-references. Interesting correspondents — Sainte-Beuve, Baudelaire, Zola, the Goncourts, about all George Sand (regrettably not Turgenev) — have been enabled to speak for themselves on occasion. The translation is consistently readable and reliable, aptly replicating the ups and downs of Flaubert's unbuttoned prose. Some of his habitual obscurities, rendered here into English for the first time, and often bowdlerized in the earlier French texts, may incite a twinge of culture-shock. We need not be puritans, nor lay claim to purer thoughts; it is simply that our language fosters different, and more limited, horizons of expectation. Thus erection, regularly invoked as a private metaphor for inspiration, consequently becomes a standard theme, varied and elaborated by flights of scabrous fancy. Associating "the pangs of art" with the joys of sex, Flaubert could moan and groan over both simultaneously. Seldom can an artist have experienced less ecstasy in "getting up" his projects.

The preceding volume must have been considerably easier to organize, since its internal drama — realistic background, romantic impetus, psychosomatic crisis, artistic vocation, oriental journey, affair with "the Muse", Louise Colet — builds up to a climax with *Madame Bovary*. Nobody would dispute the opinion of Henry James, that this first published novel was clearly the novelist's best, except perhaps the novelist himself, who understandably came to regard its unadorned acceptance as a discouragement to his further endeavours. These lay down, at all events, the pattern for the present volume, which resourcefully faces its anticlimactic preconditions. Historically, it leads from the Second Empire, personified in Flaubert's bland countenance of the Princess Mathilde Bonaparte, into the Third Republic, through the "Année Terrible" of the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune. Domestically, it registers the decline and death of his mother, in whose country home he somehow managed to live out his days, plus his relations with his orphaned niece, Caroline, which proved to be no less entangling than those of a father with his daughter. But the feminine presence that emerges most strongly is that of George Sand. The belated dialogue with her forms a thoughtful counterpart to the giddy romance with Louise Colet.

The succession of Flaubert's works is almost a paradigm, in its cyclic alternation between romanticism and realism. After the quotidian modernity of *Madame Bovary*, he reverted to the exotic past with *Salammbo*. He was still employing modern methods, he felt, since his reconstruction of ancient Carthage — unlike the prose epics of Chateaubriand — was heavily based upon historical reading and archaeological research. This invited an adversely pedantic review by a professional archaeologist, whom Flaubert put down with heavy irony. But he himself played the pedant, in responding to Sainte-Beuve's strictures, by quibbling over sources and anachronisms. The debate between friends was conducted more in sorrow than anger, and the critic printed the novelist's remonstrance with his three detailed articles. Steegmuller conscientiously annotates the documentary references, yet he scarcely notes the real gravamen of Sainte-Beuve's charges: that the book is synthetic and operatic, it smells of

the lamp, it disregards the reader. Speaking more broadly, he doubted whether the genre of historical fiction could present a convincing depiction of remote antiquity. A cogent counter-argument would also be a defence of *Marius the Epicurean*, *Joseph and seine Brüder*, *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, and *I, Claudius*, — not to mention *Quo Vadis*?

Flaubert marked his next return to the contemporary scene with his "Parisian novel", *L'Education sentimentale*. A letter complaining to the Goncourts about the vexations of Paris reminds us that he was never a city man. But his story of Frédéric Moreau comes as close as he ever did to a *roman vécu*, a "moral history" of his generation. It is indeed a study in collective disillusionment, linking personal losses with ideological failures of nerve. One's contemporaries, alas, do not like to be out of joint, again he was dismayed by a hostile reception. He comforted himself by remarking, one year afterward, that the current excesses of 1870 might have been avoided, if readers had only been willing to learn from him the object-lessons of 1848. Cyclically he turned back to a third and definitive redaction of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, his obsessive allegorical fantasy of austere dedication and worldly distraction. Then, after having acknowledged its "failure", he achieved a moderate success shortly before his death with *Trois Contes*. These repeated and quickened the temporal cycle on a dismayingly smaller scale, through two legends about saints — one medieval (*Le Jeune Homme*), one modern (*Un Coeur simple*) — plus a last ancient sinner (*Hérodias*).

The first volume of his testamentary work, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, was nearly completed when he died. The second, constituting an "Encyclopaedia of Human Stupidity", could have been prolonged indefinitely. Both George Sand and Turgenev harboured

misgivings about it; Flaubert had intermittently taken it up and set it aside over a seventeen-year period; more and more he felt himself identified, much too closely for comfort, with his subject-matter. The writer who collected clichés and bromides, who documented his writing by reading 1,500 books, who retired from the world to record his compilations, parodied himself in his comedy team of troglodytic copying-clerks. His final decade had lived up to his most pessimistic forebodings. War had filled his house with German soldiers; revolution had brought the Bonapartist régime to an apocalyptic dénouement. Prematurely aged, helplessly lamenting the deaths of his mother, his "literary conscience" Louis Bouilhet, and other lifelong friends, he was not spared money troubles. The culminating irony was his niece's marriage, thoroughly bourgeois and ultimately disastrous. He had joined his family in persuading her to forget a young painter and spouse a local businessman, who would involve them all in a train of financial embarrassments and psychological stresses.

The most congenial note in this gloomy record was the new and solidifying friendship with George Sand. The full text of their letters makes an important book by itself; Steegmuller cites and recommends the recent edition of Alphonse Jacobs. It would be hard to think of two more disparate temperaments coming to understand one another in mutual affection and moral support. Wholly apart from the contrast between them as writers — prolific publicist and fussy mandarin — they professed opposing principles. Her commitments were his aversions: progress, humanitarianism, democracy. In misanthropic reaction he cursed universal suffrage, damned the proletariat as a potential bourgeoisie, and looked upon the socialists as "those Jesuits of the

future". Civilization had taken the wrong turning in 1789, when it promulgated "that modern religion", *chic*. "What kind of a world are we going to inhabit?" he asked himself, while the Prussians were billeted on his mother's estate at Croisset, and responded with his mordant outline of history. "Paganism, Christianity, Boorism [Mufisme]: such are the great evolutions of mankind. It's sad to find oneself at the beginning of the third." None of his complaints had prevented him from duly volunteering and grimly drilling with the National Guard, a patriotic Frenchman *malgré lui*.

As opposed to his stern appeals for Justice, George Sand pleaded — Portia-like — on behalf of Mercy. That was his formulation of the issue; hers was to view it as a dialectical encounter between Desolation and Consolation. It must be admitted that things seemed to be going his way: ie, going to pieces. She was moved to reaffirm her compassion for the people by publishing a "Reply to a Friend" in *Le Temps*. This anonymous friend had never been young, she argued; she herself had never stopped being young, "if to persist in loving is a sign of youth". Older than he nonetheless by half a generation, she cast a maternal spell which he found more intriguing than the allure of his mistresses. At one point she figuratively kisses him good-night, addressing him as "my great precious child". Referring to themselves as "old troubadours", they wryly commiserate, talking through the night and reading their manuscripts aloud on infrequent visits. She did not live to read the results of her influence in *Un Coeur simple*, his sympathetic tale of female servitude and stolid endurance. But his glimmer of unwonted altruism continues to shine through his dark panorama of self-deceptions, petty vanities, tawdry motives, frustrating seductions, passive capitulations, and missed opportunities.

complimentary copies received; and they are always courteous. In spite of his complaints to his daughter at having to write them, other letters have to do with his chairmanship of the fund-raising committee for the erection of a bust of Verlaine in the Luxembourg gardens, a project frustrated until long after Mallarmé's death; first by literary jealousies and conspiracies, then by the posthumous publication of Verlaine's *Invectives*, which shocked the literary public. Another task, important but unproductive and time-consuming, was the correction of proofs for his collected prose works; even this seems to have moved slowly, although he pressed his friends into service. The volume of *Diversions* was to appear in January 1897.

The freedom of retirement seems to have tempted Mallarmé into a greater indulgence in "le rêve, ennemi de la charge", as he had put it in "Le Tombeau de Gautier". The summer stay at Valvins now stretched from May to November. Some of the more endearing letters, for a reader sensitive to Mallarmé's charm "au sens profond et magique du mot", as Fernand Gregh described it, are those he wrote to his wife and daughter before and after their shorter stay with him in the country; dealing, in the spring, with experiences with the mason and the painter in improving what is intended now to be not just a temporary summer retreat but a second home; and, in autumn, recording the aesthetic thrill he never failed to experience of watching the fall from day to day. Only when the last leaf had dropped was he prepared to rejoice in his family and deliver; and, as Lloyd Austin suggests, his repeated rejections of Deman's proposals of type-faces and layout seem to be as much a matter of stalling as of fastidious regard for presentation — though Mallarmé was always exacting on that score.

The charming and witty occasional verse he wrote to please his friends came easily to him, and there are a good many examples here. A lot of his time was spent on the chores he accepted as part of his literary involvement. Professor Austin points out that a quarter of his letters in this volume are acknowledgments of



The "eccentric dancer" Bessie McCoy (Davis) (c1886-1931) from Stars of the American Musical Theater in Historic Photographs (177pp. Dover Constable. £7.50. 0 486 24209 9).

The great humbugger

Cyril B. Mills

A. H. SAXON (Editor)

Selected Letters of P. T. Barnum
351pp. New York: Columbia University Press. \$19.95.
0 231 05412 2

P. T. Barnum, the Yankee nation's self-proclaimed "Prince of Humbug", can hardly be said to be uniquely American. For nearly half a century he was also a well-known figure on these shores, manoeuvring to have himself and his famous midget Tom Thumb received at Buckingham Palace (which he visited several times); later outraging Queen Victoria, Parliament and the general public by his unexpected purchase of Jumbo, the children's favourite, from the Royal Zoological Society; and eventually capping his long career by bringing his entire Circus to Olympos, where during the 1889-90 winter the old showman Congress. At other times he was publisher and editor of weekly newspapers; bank, water company, and hospital president; real-estate developer; and in general the leading citizen of his beloved Bridgeport, where he lived during the last forty-five years of his life. In his own day he was perhaps the most celebrated person in America, equally at home, as he wrote in one of his letters, with both "crown and cabin". To the end of his days he kept up a steady correspondence with Presidents and statesmen; generals, scientists and eminent divines; persons offering him "curiosities", trying to tempt him into investing in various schemes — or simply wanting his autograph; and of course business associates, friends and relations. In connection with these last some of the more charming letters in this volume are those Barnum wrote to his grandchildren.

For these and other revelations and delights the reader is indebted to A. H. Saxon who, with the authorization of Barnum's descendants and residual heirs, for the first time has collected and painstakingly edited over 300 letters. Eschewing the usual practice of burying the reader beneath a mountain of footnotes he has provided a series of succinct explanations or commentaries, wherever necessary, either before or after the respective letters as well as a masterful introduction to the book and a useful chronology of Barnum's life. Some two dozen illustrations, many never published before, enhance this useful and splendidly designed book, in which the mixture of several typographic styles seems to be based deliberately on the appearance of Barnum's bills. The work concludes with an Index of persons, a table of the letters' locations, and a note on sources. In this last the editor, who is at present working on a biography of Barnum, mentions the possibility of a second volume of letters, I, for one, would welcome the opportunity to learn even more about America's most celebrated showman — those frequently outrageous character and conduct are, however peculiar to the New World, of course, than conservatism is to the Old.

Here is a promising start in that direction: a selection of letters nearly spanning the showman's entire life, in which we discover, among other things, the amazing range and depth of his activities. In addition to elucidating his involvement with his American Museum in New York City, his Circus, and such well-known figures as Tom Thumb and Jenny Lind — and a love of self-promotion that showed no sign of flagging until his death, at the age of eighty in 1891 — the letters often touch on lesser known aspects of his life. These include Barnum's abiding interest in religion (he was a Universalist, which in his day was considered almost tantamount to atheism), his liking for outrageous parties, his affection for and generosity towards friends and relatives, and a jealous concern for his reputation, which he fully expected to endure forever. Curiously for all his love of

"notoriety" and his constant manipulation of the Press, he was sometimes defensive about his profession of "showman" and wished to be remembered not merely as a purveyor of amusements, but as one who strove seriously to educate and improve his public. No doubt this explains, at least in part, his building and endowing a handsome museum of natural history at Tufts College in Massachusetts; his contributions to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and the American Museum of Natural History in New York City; and his establishment in Bridgeport, Connecticut, of the Barnum Institute of Science and History, which continues today as a museum devoted to the history of the Circus and to Barnum himself.

Here one also learns to what extent civic concerns absorbed his attention. From his early twenties onwards he was active in politics, serving as Mayor of Bridgeport in 1875, representing his district four times in the Connecticut legislature, and even making a run for Congress. At other times he was publisher and editor of weekly newspapers; bank, water company, and hospital president; real-estate developer; and in general the leading citizen of his beloved Bridgeport, where he lived during the last forty-five years of his life. In his own day he was perhaps the most celebrated person in America, equally at home, as he wrote in one of his letters, with both "crown and cabin". To the end of his days he kept up a steady correspondence with Presidents and statesmen; generals, scientists and eminent divines; persons offering him "curiosities", trying to tempt him into investing in various schemes — or simply wanting his autograph; and of course business associates, friends and relations. In connection with these last some of the more charming letters in this volume are those Barnum wrote to his grandchildren.

For these and other revelations and delights the reader is indebted to A. H. Saxon who, with the authorization of Barnum's descendants and residual heirs, for the first time has collected and painstakingly edited over 300 letters. Eschewing the usual practice of burying the reader beneath a mountain of footnotes he has provided a series of succinct explanations or commentaries, wherever necessary, either before or after the respective letters as well as a masterful introduction to the book and a useful chronology of Barnum's life. Some two dozen illustrations, many never published before, enhance this useful and splendidly designed book, in which the mixture of several typographic styles seems to be based deliberately on the appearance of Barnum's bills. The work concludes with an Index of persons, a table of the letters' locations, and a note on sources. In this last the editor, who is at present working on a biography of Barnum, mentions the possibility of a second volume of letters, I, for one, would welcome the opportunity to learn even more about America's most celebrated showman — those frequently outrageous character and conduct are, however peculiar to the New World, of course, than conservatism is to the Old.

These were even fashions to enhance the effect of sincerity. The sentimental figure was long and willowy, with narrow, sloping shoulders, and a slender waist. The primary colour was grey. The overall effect was meant to be one of demure self-effacement: effacing a woman's body was an effort to reveal her soul. Hats went out of style and were replaced by the bonnet, which focused attention on the face by framing it with a simple oval line. Beautiful thoughts and sentiments were supposed to shine through healthy skin, which meant that drinking and smoking cigars were proscribed. This transparency was the sentimentalists' answer to the problem of hypocrisy in the modern world, and not surprisingly it didn't work.

Straining after sincerity

John Hopkins

KAREN HALTTUNEN

Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870
262pp. Yale University Press. £16.50.
0 300 02835 0

This book with a racy title is a study of middle-class culture in America, 1830-70. An uninspiring subject, one might imagine, which could have been handled in an essay. Instead we get a big book. Nevertheless, Karen Halttunen has done her homework: the research has been tremendous, the notes and bibliography are impressive, and the text is peppered with hundreds of quotes — and gives us some real insight into an area of American culture and history where we might have never bothered to look.

In the 1830s and 1840s, as the American Industrial Revolution was getting under way, thousands of young men were leaving their farms and families and migrating to the cities in search of work. Here was young America on the make: knapsack in hand, clothing coarse and homespun, the bloom of outdoor youth on his cheeks, the rustic entered the city to seek fame and fortune. Ever since Ben Franklin's dramatic entrance into colonial Philadelphia, the image of American youth standing hopefully on the urban threshold had captured the spirit of America. The era of the self-made man had arrived.

But danger threatened. The city was a world of strangers, and the advice manuals of the age warned raw-boned youth to beware of tricksters — hypocritical confidence men and painted women out to seduce and ruin him. Yet youth's worst enemy lurked not in the streets but in his own breast. It was feared that hypocrisy paid off in an urban environment, and naive youth might have to learn the tricks of the con-man to get ahead in business or politics. This of course is exactly what happened.

On his travels through Jacksonian America, Tocqueville was struck by the "restlessness of temper" that plagued Americans anxious to improve their lot. Because they lived suspended between the facts of their present social condition and the promise of the future, they were prone to anxieties about their social identity. "Thus, not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever on himself alone and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart."

To resolve this antebellum crisis of social confidence, the hundreds of manuals that poured off the presses after 1830 called for perfect sincerity as an antidote to hypocrisy. Women were reckoned to be more sincere than men; it was their special responsibility to oppose hypocrisy, the parlor, where the aspiring middle classes worked to establish their claims to social status, to that elusive quality of "gentility". Men and women policed on the threshold of gentility were admitted or excluded on the basis of their genteel performance.

Etiquette books laid down hundreds of rules. Polite people were not to yawn, sigh, spit, scratch, cough and expectorate, or examine their handkerchiefs after blowing their noses. The evils of public nail-paring, teeth-picking, and hair-combing were strenuously condemned. The complexity of these rules suggested the difficulty of flawlessly sustaining the genteel performance. There were repeated injunctions against picking the nose or blowing it with the fingers, scratching the head, staring, breaking the mirror, swearing or talking loudly, and losing the temper. There were deep fears among the middle classes of the vulnerability of the genteel performance, and nightmares about being exposed as a secret slob.

The manuals preached that "To practice sincerity, is to speak as we think; to do as we profess; to perform what we promise; and really to be what we would seem and appear to be."

In the view of contemporary moralists, however, the middle-class pursuit of fashion was itself hypocritical. The greatest evil was symbolized by the "bland, smooth-tongued, genteel fashionable companion" trying to make a good impression. Worst of all, the fashionable confidence game was being played by women, too. Con-men and painted women had somehow gotten into the parlour. The problem of hypocrisy created a vicious circle. The sentimental demand for sincerity generated social forms labelled as sincere, but once these conventions became fashionable they were condemned as hypocrisy. The arbiters of middle-class culture wrung their hands and admitted that they couldn't have it both ways. They realized the futility of establishing sincere forms of daily conduct in the rough and tumble world of America on the make.

One of the most significant expressions of sentimental culture was the cult of mourning. Those who properly mourned the dead maintained beautiful cemeteries, which stood as testimony to their respectability. Those who failed to mourn their dead and let their graveyards fall into ruin could not be trusted to practise the lofty principles they preached: they were confidence men. Rules for genteel mourning were

drawn up that ultimately subordinated the sentiment of bereavement to the respectable performance of bereavement. Even *Godey's Ladies' Book* (the fashion bible of the day), whose columns regularly included advice on mourning attire, delivered periodic sentimental apologies for its contributions to the formalization of bereavement.

In the 1850s parlour games became popular, and the theatre began to ridicule the social pretensions and blunders of the newly rich. The cult of sincerity was on the wane, and the middle class began to feel confident enough to poke fun at itself. Sentimental sincerity simply could not govern conduct in a world of strangers.

The genteel performance became more theatrical, the parlour a stage, and the message was this: middle-class social life was a charade, and the struggle for genteel status a confidence game. Confidence men and painted women, it was finally admitted, included all Americans on the make.

There is a kind of moral to this story. The American middle class still regards transparency as a sound moral ideal for personal conduct, but the villainous con-man has been welcomed back to where he belongs: into the mainstream of American middle-class culture. When Dale Carnegie advises his readers to smile in order to win friends and influence people, he insists on the sincerity of smiles. Horatio Alger's hero Dick rises from boot-black to respectability using all the tricks of the con-man. It all goes to show how much the world has changed, or hasn't.

Sharon Zukin's *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (212pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £12.75. 0 8018 2694 2) looks at the social and economic forces which influence real estate development in modern cities, changing ways in which people live and replacing declining industries with service-based capital. One chapter looks at the relationship between capital shifts and the cultural avant-garde in urban America.

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Harvard University Press
128, Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SD

APRIL 29 1983

Beastly brainwork

Stephen Stich

STEPHEN WALKER

Animal Thought
437pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£17.50.
0 7100 9037 4

A few years ago, I published a paper in a relatively obscure journal posing some problems about applying common-sense psychological terms like "belief" to animals. Hardly had the paper appeared when the postman delivered a long, vitriolic manuscript attacking both my arguments and my morals. The author of the critique was quite certain that there was a hidden motive behind my rather bland philosophical reflections on animal belief. He was a radical vegetarian, and on his view I was a closet carnivore — a running dog of the slaughterhouse industry. The accusation left me stupefied, a reaction that I now think quite naïve. After all, from Descartes's time down to the present, much of what has been written about the mental life of non-human animals has been motivated by one hidden agenda or another.

In the first two chapters of Stephen Walker's book, some of these hidden agendas are reviewed. For Descartes it was important that animals did not have souls capable of thought, lest he be faced with the theological embarrassment of a heaven cluttered with the souls of bugs and beasts. For Darwin, Romanes and Huxley, it was equally important that animals are capable of rudimentary thought and feeling, since if they are not, the gradualism and evolutionary continuity essential to Darwinism would be threatened. In more recent years, as Walker suggests in his last chapter, the various efforts to teach apes to communicate in language have been motivated, at least in part, by opposition to Chomsky's nativist thesis, which holds that much knowledge essential to the acquisition of language is innate, and unique to the human species. In a field where polemics and ideology are the norm, Walker's book is a refreshing exception. It has no hidden agenda. The bulk of its four hundred pages is devoted to surveying and summarizing the literature on animal thought in a way that makes it accessible to the non-specialist.

Lessons in moderation

David Raphael

PETER JONES

Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context
230pp. Edinburgh University Press.
£17.50.
0 85224 443 6

David Hume seems now to be as popular a subject for scholarly books as any of the great philosophers. In the English-speaking world at least, the number of such studies during the past twenty years appears to be as high as that for Aristotle or Kant. Conferences commemorating the bicentenary of Hume's death provided a stimulus, in 1976, but the rising tide could be discerned well before that date.

The fact is that scholars appreciate now as never before the subtlety, originality, exceptional honesty, and many-sided character of Hume's thought. One welcome feature of recent work has been a wider recognition that Hume is a great thinker not only in the theory of knowledge but also in ethics and the philosophy of religion, and that he is in addition a thinker of significance in political theory and in economics. Another has been the attention paid to the influence of other thinkers upon him.

On the latter topic there has been a brisk debate about the effect of Newton upon Hume's aims and methods, how far Hume was a Newtonian, and whether he moved

The first problem to be confronted by anyone interested in the mental life of animals is a definitional one. Just what is meant by such terms as "thought", "perception", "awareness" and the like? Without some account of how these terms are to be used, we do not know what is being asked when we ponder whether animals can think or perceive. Walker's approach to this problem is, I think, exactly right. He makes no attempt to give abstract or theoretical definitions. Rather, he stimulates that questions about the mental lives of animals are to be understood as asking how similar their mental lives are to our own. "Questions about thought in animals" are to be rephrased "in the form 'To what extent are animals like us?'". We can thus ask a number of separate questions, such as: 'Do animals have visual systems which work like ours?' 'Do animals have mental imagery like ours?' 'Do animals have hopes and fears like ours?' In effect, Walker is proposing that we anchor our questions about the mental life of animals by analogy to our own case. Fido has thoughts or images or fears if he undergoes something like what we do when we describe ourselves as having thoughts or images or fears.

Having opted for a Protagonist account of mental states in which the measure, the next problem to be confronted is how hypotheses about animal mentality are to be tested. How do we know whether a dog or a rat or an ape is having experiences similar to our own? Here Walker suggests that we argue from similar causes to similar effects. Our own mental states are obviously causally dependent on the structure and state of our brains. So if a beast has a brain with a similar structure, it has a reasonable bet that it has similar experiences as well. To buttress the argument from anatomy and physiology, we can look at how the animal behaves. If it exhibits similar behaviour under similar circumstances, then there is still more reason to think that its experiences are similar to ours.

Though Walker is not entirely clear on the point, it would appear that he endorses both the "similar brain entails similar experiences" principle and its converse, since he often argues from the dissimilarity of brains to the dissimilarity of experiences. On this point, those who advocate a "functionalist" account of mentality would part company with him. For a

functionalist, what is essential to a thought or experience is the causal role it plays in interacting with other mental states, with stimuli and with behaviour. Moreover, the pattern of interacting roles exhibited by my mental states could perfectly well be duplicated by the states of an organism or a machine whose physiology or hardware was quite different from my own. On the functionalist view, the mental stands to the physical roughly as a computer's program stands to its hardware. One and the same program can be run on machines with very different hardware. Thus a functionalist would dispute Walker's suggestion that a robot could not have "intentions and memories like our own". However, this looming theoretical dispute with functionalism has little practical significance in the context of Walker's book, since in those cases where differences in brain structure are taken as evidence for difference in mental states, there are generally abundant behavioural differences as well. And for a functionalist the latter, if not the former, are sufficient to establish the thesis that the animal under consideration has a mental life different from our own.

Perhaps the most impressive example of Walker's strategy for establishing that some animals have a mental life not unlike our own is his discussion of memory. It is conceded on all sides that the past history of an animal will influence its future behaviour. Pavlovian and Skinnerian conditioning illustrates this pervasive phenomenon. However, in the case of human memory it seems introspectively clear that we retain memory traces of various events — internal images or representations which enable us to report on what we have experienced long after the event. Do animals have memories of this sort, or is the effect of conditioning simply to link a certain pattern of stimuli with a certain pattern of responses? A deeply entrenched tradition in twentieth-century experimental psychology insists that the latter sort of "minimalist" account is the correct one, and that there is no justification for postulating human-like memory experiences to explain why an animal's past history influences its future behaviour. (Indeed, in its most virulent Skinnerian form, this tradition denies human-like memory traces to humans. Walker, to his credit, refuses to take such nonsense seriously.)

Walker's case against the minimalist

has two components. First, he recounts numerous ingenious experiments reported in the literature which are aimed at demonstrating that sometimes an animal's behaviour cannot be explained unless we postulate an inner representation of past experiences. In the simplest of these, caged animals were allowed to see the experimenter conceal food. After the passage of various amounts of time, the animals were released from the cage. When the animals regularly proceed directly to the spot where the food is hidden, Walker argues, this is evidence that they have retained an internal representation of the food being hidden. In some rather more sophisticated experiments, pigeons are shown a certain stimulus pattern (a horizontal line, say) and then, some time later, they are required to peck at one of several stimulus patterns. They are rewarded with food only if they peck at the pattern they have been shown. A bird which successfully learns to peck at the pattern it had been shown most recently must retain some internal representation of that pattern.

The second component in Walker's critique of the minimalist view of memory surveys the literature on brain damage in man and animals. Though the evidence is limited, it appears that when the hippocampus area of the brain is removed in human subjects, they display a curious pattern of memory loss. They can report normally on their life before the operation, but have difficulty laying down new memories that last for more than a few minutes. One patient never learned the location of the lavatory in the hospital in which he convalesced, nor the address of the house he lived in afterwards. Oddly, though, such patients can learn new automatic routines and habits. One patient who played the piano could learn new pieces and perform them if given the opening bars, though he professed no recollection of ever having heard the music before. What makes all of this important for the study of animal memory is that monkeys have analogous difficulties in laying down long-term memories after the output from the hippocampus has been surgically eliminated. However, as with the human piano-player, these brain-damaged monkeys can readily acquire new and fairly complex motor habits by subjecting them to selective reward and punishment. In the light of these results it is hard not to conclude,

Walker's case against the minimalist

Chapter Four is a tangential little piece, the main purpose of which is to show that Hume did not have a theory of language. Although it begins by saying that Hume was familiar with contemporary speculation on language in French — but also in English, Scottish, and German — writers, it is not clear why this chapter is included at all. One aim, says Jones, is to alert readers to Hume's views on rhetoric, but "these issues will not be taken up in this book". The final Chapter Five begins by trying to show that the Ciceronian virtue of moderation is found in Hume's views of the natural, in his philosophy of knowledge and of action alike. It then suddenly alters course and looks for comparisons between Hume and Wittgenstein! What on earth has that to do with the "Ciceronian and French context" or with the more general theme of sources of Hume's thought?

The second reason for disappointment is that the details of Jones's careful scholarship obscure the view. He must have realized this, since he has added long summaries to the end of each section, but even they are not always easy to follow. On broader issues, perhaps, the writer as well as the reader fails to see the wood for the trees. In his short chapter on language, Jones compares Hume's account of the role of a form of words in promising with a statement by Fudendorf that discourse presupposes a tacit promise to use words in their received meaning. The comparison is not apt, in my opinion, but it also suggests a failure to appreciate the real importance of Hume's account of promises both as a

with Walker, that monkeys have memories of past experiences which are not utterly dissimilar from our own. Throughout Walker's book, the minimalist (or the "killjoy," as Daniel Dennett calls him) can be glimpsed grumbling sceptically just off-stage. Walker's preoccupation with the minimalist's scepticism — understandable enough in the light of the history of twentieth-century psychology — is responsible for some of the weaknesses and some of the strengths of the volume. Under the former head, I would include Walker's reluctance to offer any but the most sketchy and vague hypotheses about the cognitive processes that might underlie the experimental results he reviews. Postulating some sort of memory trace which is independent of direct stimulus-response links is about as bold a hypothesis as we are offered. What sorts of mechanisms animals might use to exploit and manipulate these representations is a topic that remains unexplored.

But if behaviourist killjoys have led Walker to excessive theoretical caution, they have also provoked some useful and thoroughly delightful anti-behaviourist critiques. Walker notes, for example, that many experimental tests of the psychological capacities of animals reveal hardly any difference between goldfish and chimpanzees. But surely, he argues, the most reasonable explanation of such a paradoxical result is that the tests themselves are to blame. Nor is this just idle speculation. Most of the experiments used to explore the psychological capacities, and in particular the learning abilities, of animals are variations on the theme of classical conditioning. However, there is evidence that an isolated signal cord can "learn" to associate stimulus and response in the Pavlovian paradigm. Small wonder, then, that animals with large brains and those with tiny brains exhibit little difference in learning ability, when conditioning is used as the test of ability.

Walker's attacks on the behaviourists' scepticism and on their often myopic methods are welcome and well aimed. But the central achievement of his book is not a polemical one. He has assembled, clearly and systematically, a vast amount of information about animal brains and behaviour. In so doing he has created a valuable resource for anyone interested in the mental life of animals.

Learning the lingo

P. N. Johnson-Laird

ERIC WANNER and LILA R. GLEITMAN (Editors)
Language Acquisition: The State of the Art
532pp. Cambridge University Press.
£27.50 (paperback, £10.95).
0 521 23817 X

I once had an argument about whether it is difficult to understand how a child learns its native tongue. My antagonist did not concede that there was any intellectual problem whatsoever. Treading unwittingly in the footsteps of St Augustine, she thought that it was obvious how you learned language: your elders pointed at things and named them, and thereafter you could designate the same things with the same labels. I tried to explain that there was more to meaning than this "common sense" philosophy, and that a language also has particular speech sounds, intonation contours, and a grammar, which all have to be mastered. But she brushed my objections aside like a good Tory minister of education: your parents would instruct you on those matters, too. I withdrew in considerable frustration, unable to convince her that what is truly a major scientific puzzle.

What I needed was Eric Wanner and Lila R. Gleitman's splendid book. It contains the best possible case for the complexity of the problem: a compilation of the very diverse approaches to it that psychologists and linguists currently pursue. Indeed, with the possible exception of the Augustinian behaviourism of my opponent, any half-way sensible idea on the topic is likely to be supported by some worker in the field. And Wanner and Gleitman have gone out of their way to encompass as much of the variety as possible: they have brought together fifteen chapters by leading

American scholars (including two English expatriates). The disparate nature of expert opinion emerges immediately from the editors' introduction, which gives us the state of "the state of the art", and, refreshingly, submits the subsequent chapters to some stringent criticism.

The first disagreement is about the general nature of acquiring a native tongue. Does a child learn language? Or does it grow within the child as an innately determined mental organ triggered by experience? Or, as Bever argues in his contribution, is language an abstract Platonic form that the child discovers in much the same way that mathematicians are supposed to discover the properties of numbers? At the heart of this controversy is a perennial argument about the relative importance of innate human nature and contingent human experience. Its focus is grammar. If natural language calls for a transformational grammar of the sort formulated by Chomsky, then children must acquire such a grammar from the relatively fragmentary evidence of the utterances they hear and the reactions they get to their own remarks. There is a well-known proof, already reviewed in the chapter by Kenneth Wexler, that a formal procedure for identifying any but the simplest of grammars can succeed only with feedback about both what is, and is not, grammatical. Yet young children receive no such instruction, and virtually no "reinforcement" for speaking grammatically.

There are several potential ways out of the dilemma. One can argue, as do several of the contributors, that grammatical learning depends on the meanings of utterances. These meanings may in turn reflect a cognitive construal of the world. Hence, a child's basic grammatical categories may not be purely syntactic ones, but a semantically motivated set of cases, such as "actor" and "object of action". If this assumption held for the whole of linguistic development, however, it

would imply that there is no grammar in the mind, but merely certain ineluctable patterns in the way people think. Word order, as Dan Slobin puts it, would be a natural reflection of the order of thought. One is reminded of the splendid prejudice that French is the best language since its grammar alone corresponds to the true order of logical thinking. The trouble is, of course, that children do learn other languages, and so much of any language (even French) fails to correlate with clear semantic categories: not all nouns denote objects, and not all verbs denote actions. Moreover, three year-olds tune in remarkably quickly to many such aspects of grammar, eg, the gender system of German, the inflectional system of Turkish. It seems, as Michael Maratsos argues, that children are able to form purely syntactic rules that are not based on supporting semantic information.

Another much canvassed guide to early grammatical learning is the tacit knowledge of mothers. Perhaps they knew more than they can say, and implicitly direct their children along an easy route to grammatical knowledge, using a simplified syntax and gestures that demarcate important syntactical units. Unfortunately, Marilyn Shatz has found children to be singularly obvious to such cues. Worse still, grammar appears to develop in the absence of any linguistic information whatsoever. Susan Goldin-Meadow has studied the spontaneous gestures that profoundly deal children invent to communicate with their hearing parents. These children string signs together according to syntactic rules, and their "utterances" show a striking structural similarity to those of their speaking peers.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that there really is innate grammatical

knowledge. Thomas Roeper, in an outstanding integration of theory and experiment, spells out an ingenious learning mechanism. Cognition triggers specific grammatical hypotheses; for example, an underlying grasp of causation triggers hypotheses about the ways in which it may be expressed syntactically. In developing grammar, children pay attention only to sentences that are relevant to their current grammatical hypotheses. They use these sentences to choose the appropriate syntactic format from a finite number of possibilities laid down innately. Of course they attempt to understand other sentences, too, but they do not use them to advance the construction of grammar. This idea is novel, and it explains a number of well-attested phenomena, such as children's inability to absorb explicit grammatical instruction. It also solves the major puzzle of how speakers can converge on the same language despite their vastly different linguistic histories.

The appeal to inborn constraints on the form of grammar depends more on the failure of alternative hypotheses than on the existence of overwhelming positive evidence. Those who wish to resist the appeal have one more idea yet to try: for each rule in the grammar there may be a corresponding rule for semantic interpretation. This is a familiar procedure in developing a semantics for a formal language, and the logician, Richard Montague, defended its applicability to natural language, contrary to the views of both Russell and Chomsky. But, if Montague was right, grammar might be constructed from inferences based on semantic rules and a knowledge of the words in utterances. Children have to solve the puzzle of what syntactic rules correlate with given semantic rules. Indeed, the semantic rules

themselves might not be inborn, but derive from innate constraints on cognitive processes.

Similar appeals to the doctrine of innate ideas have been made to account for children's acquisition of lexical meanings. A six year-old may know as many as 14,000 words, and no one has succeeded in formulating a satisfactory explanation of how so much can be acquired so rapidly. Since language is a vehicle for intentional communication, you can say, "from now on, let's call that stuff over there, whatever it is, *bodge*". Henceforth, when you want to refer to that stuff, you can do so using the word, "*bodge*", and I can grasp what you are saying. Children tune in to this fact about language very rapidly. They readily create a new word, as Eve Clark shows, if they do not have access to the *not just*. "It broomed her", said a two year-old, thereby coining a new verb in order to account for his baby sister's tears. The trouble with communicative intentions, however, is that they play havoc with the traditional idea of learning a verbal label for all objects that have some set of particular features in common. In fact, both Melissa Bowerman and Susan Carey establish that children latch on to the meaning of a word as an unanalysed "package", rather than as an entity composed of separate features to be acquired piecemeal.

Learning to speak our native tongue is arguably the most important and the most difficult intellectual task that ever confronts us. We cannot all aspire to genius with the written word, but anyone with any linguistic curiosity at all should dip into this book. A browse should convince the sceptical that how we learn to speak is indeed a very puzzling question. I shall have a book ready to throw at the next person who tells me that the answer is obvious.

Emergency exit

Rosemary Dinnage

CAROLYN STEEDMAN

The Tidy House
263pp. Virago. £9.95 (paperback, £5.95).
0 86068 321 4

The Tidy House is an oddity, at best original, at worst a confusing ragbag. Carolyn Steedman has taken a fairly banal (but, as she says, it helps to anticipate dullness in children's work) narrative by three eight-year-old girls from a primary school class that she was teaching in 1976, and used it as a peg for a whole range of suggestions about working-class childhoods, the experience of femaleness, and children's use of writing. The peg gives way under the strain like a rickety cloakroom peg overloaded with satchels and gymshoes and overcoats; but there is some unusual incidental material to be picked up nevertheless.

The story produced by the children is taken with the greatest earnestness and the book set out in scholarly fashion with notes, appendices, and facsimiles (Carolyn Steedman is severe about the habit of reading children's writing, especially little girls', for its amusement value). Written cooperatively, the children's story concerns two couples who are friends, and their children. The main difficulty with the book is in taking its central thesis seriously: that this quite jolly narrative is about "warped" lives, cramped hopes, opportunistic loss, that it gives a glimpse of the (apparently) disagreeable fate of being a girl and this case was Hobbes, but Hume may not have been aware of it, just as he may not have realized what he owed to Hutcheson.

I am not complaining that Peter Jones has chosen to give up the benefit of his researches on Hume the fox, who learned from others many things, rather than to write a different sort of book on Hume the hedgehog, who did marvels with one or two big things. It is a pity, however, that his pursuit of the fox should obscure the hedgehog.

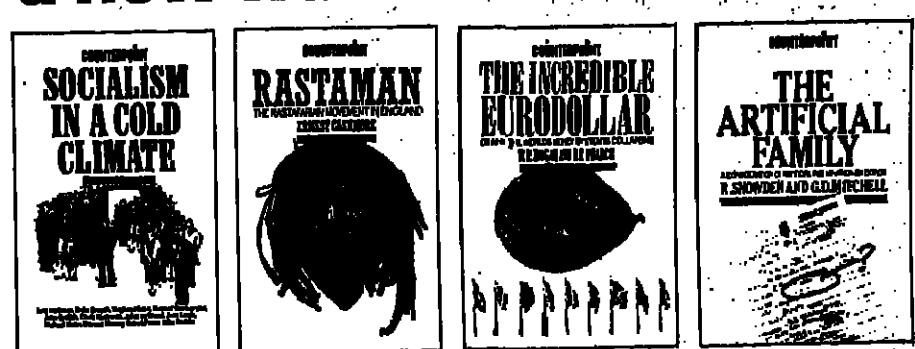
many cups of tea, a back garden with sunflowers, rose bushes, and pet animals, a birthday with cake and presents, and Jo and Mark who "sit up all night kissing" because they want a baby and "went asleep happy". It is true that one of the fictional characters, Carl (one of the girl authors was Carla) does a good deal of whining and gets a slap, but children do love a naughty character to gloat over in their stories. The high point of pretentiousness is the author's suggestion that for such little girls as the writers, being working-class is their "primary emergency" and being female their "secondary emergency" — a distinction actually taken from concentration camp victims.

Steedman promises more than she delivers when she indicates that the children's narrative and their taped conversations will show how the acquisition of written symbols enables the child to manipulate and remould possibilities. As she says, this is an important and fairly unexplored area, but there is no real indication as to how Carla, Linnie, or Melissa have done that through their writing. In any case, the facsimile shows that the children have sometimes been misread ("Is there still no charge? Dor, dor, dor, dor" should be "Is there still no charge? Dor, dor, dot, dot" and the tapes appear to indicate that some of their ideas were suggested by the teacher.

Steedman is best when she gets away from over-interpretation of the "Tidy House" story to discuss in chapters that could make separate essays, children's writing — and writing about children — in the past. Even though little girls are more verbal and literate than boys, it is curious that the daily journals from the nineteenth century that she quotes were all kept by girls; perhaps boys of around the same age were already away from boarding-school learning rugby and Latin instead of meticulous observation and the use of English.

There are also moving quotations about little working girls from the other end of the social scale, by Mayhew — an author who stuck to a maximum of observation, and minimum of comment.

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commentary

Scheveningen revisited

Harley Preston

The Hague School - Dutch Masters of the 19th Century
Royal Academy

There remains a continuing fascination in the present era with the endless riches of Western art of the last century from which more and more tarnished treasure is dredged up, polished and displayed for admiration. The Barbizon School, for example, has been adequately re-evaluated to something of its true status in a period of slightly less than the past quarter century. Whether or not we are to see the Royal Academy exhibition *The Hague School - Dutch Masters of the 19th Century* as a "Scheveningen Revisited", an equivalent in kind of Robert Herbert's seminal Barbizon show of 1962, there is no doubt that in terms of an ever-developing and modifying taste, it was inevitable it should happen.

The well-springs of the Hague School lay in the art of Corot, Rousseau, Millet, Jacque, Dupré, Diaz and Troyon, and a little later, in Lhermitte, Breton and Bastien-Lepage. Courbet offered a challenge. The informing presence of Charles-François Daubigny is apparent not only in the quiet and limpid canal scenes of Jacob Maris, even in Israel's "Sandbarge", but also in the painterly handling of Mesdag's "The Return of the Lifeboat" and "Sunset". In the latter is seen also the influence of Courbet's visions of the immensity of sea and sky, Millet and Rousseau imbue Willem Roelofs's "The Rainbow", indeed his more intimate studies "The Hovel" and "Beaufort" presuppose the exemplar of the *grand refusé*.

Millet and Jacque seem to lie behind one of the great pictures in the show, Anton Mauve's "The Return of the Flock" (from Philadelphia) with its brittle and crackling blackness studded with gently luminous sheep. The bold

whole play is a paradigm of a certain kind of novel. It is structured in chapter form. Paragraphs of high-flow description ("Daisy gazed at the rambling red-brick Elizabethan mansion lit by the setting sun...") and brief directions ("Daisy paled"). "The corners of Clare's mouth twitched". "They collapsed" are spoken, and sometimes acted, as asides. More importantly Miss Deegan has managed to encapsulate an entire ethos ("For Grangewood - for England") and a vanished culture (an essay topic is "Summarize the Causes of England's Greatness": the subjects for the poetry competition are "Heroes" or "The Meditations of a Lighthouse").

The plot is a masterpiece of complication with hidden treasure, long-lost uncles, Bolshevik plots and wrongful accusations. The apotheosis of Daisy comes after she has scored the winning goal in a vital hockey match, saved Sybil and Monica's lives in a (deviously staged) cliff-top rescue, cleared her name, found the treasure and her father (presumed dead before the play begins) and nearly died of brain fever in the space of twenty-four hours. It is only right that the hockey match, which forms the emotional high-point of the play, is the most exciting of these events.

To anyone who can pick up the literary allusions it is all very amusing but the point of the school story is that it is a moral tale: Daisy's vindication is the real triumph. A lot of fun is had with the more baroque aspects but no one exits without at least a turn (and a run) and the script merits gentler treatment. The audience is asked both to laugh at the gaudiness on stage and to sympathize with Daisy in her fight against snobs, sneaks and cowards. In the end it has no hesitation in cheering the riggering girl in the school.

emptiness of "The Marsh" suggests some of the more austere and daring oil sketches of Rousseau and Daubigny, although in his famous painting "Riders on the Beach at Scheveningen" Mauve conjures up, by contrast, a scene of everyday life with *débauche*-like immediacy and a tonality of higher key. A side glance at German painting is at times in evidence, and the more mysterious, unyielding art of the somewhat equivocal Matthijs Maris shows an awareness of the English illustrators and the Pre-Raphaelite succession as if viewed through the monochrome of the reproductive engraving.

Much more could be said here, but to play games of "spot the influence" is not ultimately rewarding. The works on view speak unmistakably with the accents of their particular time and place, and have their own moods and quiet homely poetry of understated sentiment. Despite the protests of some artists, this is its earlier phases at least a "grey school" with a glorification of greys which may be those of charred stubble as in Mauve's open, twilight fields or the pearliness of his "Fishing Boat on the Beach at Scheveningen" and his deeper-toned "A Dutch Road", or of Jacob Maris's sonorous "Allotments near The Hague". In the latter's "Beached Fishing Boat" from the Hague Gemeentemuseum, the greys burn with a dazzling, platinum radiance. Indeed, many paintings have a metallic lustre, now golden, now leaden, now coppery, now purest silver. "Dutch Impressionists" is a misnomer - there is little of French Impressionism here with its instantaneous fix of transient light and colour caught in a web of small brush strokes of broken pigment.

The Hague School taps an earlier phase of naturalism in its landscapes, as of French Realism with occasional overtones of Courbet, the assertiveness of whose brushwork invades even the placid compositions of the Maris brothers, although it is the softer domestic realism of Bonvin which runs more nearly parallel with that of some figure subjects - even van Gogh's. Light is unquestionably a central

preoccupation, but it is often the light of a cold, white, supersaturated glow.

The palette and tonalities eventually warm up, particularly in the relatively long sequence of paintings by Jan Hendrik Weissenbruch which reveal a notable range and variety of style - a distinct discovery of the exhibition. Here an almost Biedermeier eye develops in vision to the blood luminosity of the "Beach Scene" of 1887, perhaps with a hint of Manet, even Degas, certainly of Jongkind, and on to the dashing breadth of the near-grisaille "Beach Scene" of 1901, faintly reminiscent of the late Vollon. This new naturalistic School, in the parochial Dutch context a "modern" one, broke finally with the seventeenth-century categories of expression - hardly a still life to be seen - but the benevolent shades of the Golden Age linger, and not merely in the objectively compassionate peasants and celebrations of age (as in the moving "Growing Old" of Josef Israëls. Here a warm, Rembrandtesque chiaroscuro is allied to thick and fearless brushwork to sum up something of the integrity and honesty of the entire group.

There is in the art of Israel's air of detachment which just holds back from the brink of sentimentality, and the very broad and sketch-like "Meditation" (almost an introspective church subject) makes evident his appeal for Lieberman. With Johannes Bosboom, oldest of the painters, who has remained intermittently remembered for his richly-toned, sombre church interiors, a similar debt to the Rembrandt School (and avowedly to de Witte) is also explicit. Weissenbruch's bright and polished "View of Haarlem" looks back directly across two centuries to the famous views of Jacob van Ruisdael with the isolated church still seen beyond the bleaching fields under a resonant cloudy blue sky.

Perhaps the purist might quibble with the inclusion of the more universally prestigious names of van Gogh and Mondrian. With a little stretching and some appropriate documentation the exhibition can be made more embracing, comfortably enough, the van Gogh familiar mainly to the itinerant researcher (or the peruser of de la Faille) and the dramatically "pre-Mondrian" Mondrian.

The catalogue (336pp. The Royal Academy of Arts, £5.50, 0 297 78069 7) is shiny and fashionably massive, meticulously documented, profusely illustrated with additional pictures and thorough to the point of extending in various directions of its subject. The essays are largely the work of Ronald de Leeuw and Jan Sillevis, with contributions from Hans Kraan, Charles Dumas, Charles Moffett and Herbert Henkels; the bibliographies are most valuable.

The plot is a masterpiece of complication with hidden treasure, long-lost uncles, Bolshevik plots and wrongful accusations. The apotheosis of Daisy comes after she has scored the winning goal in a vital hockey match, saved Sybil and Monica's lives in a (deviously staged) cliff-top rescue, cleared her name, found the treasure and her father (presumed dead before the play begins) and nearly died of brain fever in the space of twenty-four hours. It is only right that the hockey match, which forms the emotional high-point of the play, is the most exciting of these events.

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commentary

Annotations of Worktown

Frances Spalding

British International Association
Museum of Modern Art, Oxford

"Bringing art to the people", wrote Francis Klingender, in his book *English and English Caricature*, "is in the least tradition of British culture." Klingender was the most influential spokesman with the Artists International Association where he fostered the notion that art is a form of social consciousness, and that as long as there are different classes, no single set of aesthetic values will prevail. The current exhibition, celebrating the fifth anniversary of the AIA, upholds this view. The work of Sunday painters mingles with that of professionals; "fine" artists jostle with illustrators, cartoonists, designers and radical in politics. The binding principle is not any standard of aesthetic unity or coherence, but a concern with facts. As Lynda Morris and Robert Radford, the organizers of the show at Oxford, respect this diversity, but their selection is nevertheless slanted towards realism, the style the AIA did much to promote. The large-scale works verge on agit-prop, while the small oils, prints and drawings affirm the slogan "conservative in art and radical in politics". Realism, of course, was the style best suited to the proletarian cause. To bring out this point, work by Gill, Grant, Moore, Paul Nash and other well-known artists is omitted to make space for working-class subjects by little-known painters. Worker-artists, such as the coal-miners' Ashington Group, were encouraged because their lifelong experience of industry was felt to bring more realism to a subject than anything professional training could supply. Nevertheless a gap remained. The bohemian, often Hampstead-based artists did not always mix comfortably with their working-class colleagues;

The AIA was the most political artist group in the 1930s and the most diverse. Originally the idea of an artist group who had worked in Moscow, Clifford Rowe, and given direction by the industrial designer Mischa Black, it began in 1933 as the "Artists International"; it extolled art as a weapon in the class struggle and was determinedly Marxist. Two years later it broadened its policy in order to form a popular front; it added "Association"

After the Battle of Little Sparta

Michael Schmidt

One of the vital traces of "high culture" in Scotland is the neo-classical garden and garden temple of the poet Ian Hamilton Finlay. It is called Little Sparta and it spreads itself over the side of a mountain in Lanarkshire, civilizing the landscape in the landscape's own terms by identifying and framing in the landscape famous vistas from Claude and Poussin; there are almost literally "columns in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones", and everywhere connections re-established between artifacts and the world from which they are drawn. Any of the thousands of visitors who have passed that way will confirm that Little Sparta is a temple, and by the time you reach it you are spiritually prepared for higher transformations effected there in and on various media: glass, paper, ceramics, neon, wood, metal. The craftsmanship of all the ancillary articles - most of them

collaborations between Finlay and other artists - is excellent. Each object is accompanied by documentation which clarifies its nature and its purpose within the temple.

I said the garden and temple are refreshing; but in fact both have just been closed down, apparently for good, by the action of Strathclyde Region (the local council) the Region of the Scottish Arts Council, the Scottish Office, the Secretary of State for Scotland, and the general apathy of Scottish writers and artists. How has this come to pass, and what is implied by it?

The history is tortuous and complex, but in a nutshell it is this. Some years ago, Ian Hamilton Finlay withdrew from the Strathclyde Region without a word, and the Region, which was then called the Strathclyde Region, was left with a large number of works, most of which were not Mr Finlay's. Some belonged to a well-known American museum and were on loan to the temple; others belonged to individuals and were similarly on loan; still others were collaborative works between Mr Finlay and colleagues and the "ownership" was shared. Apprised of these facts, the Region refused to return the property, to relieve an "understanding" with Mr Finlay, or to comment. The Sheriff Officer removed the works without their documentation, hence he took only part of each work since the documentation is integral to each piece. Mr Finlay wrote to Christie's: "How are you going to value the works? Have you valued (insured) the works? Do you know who made them? When? Whose property they are? Whose collections they are in? The history? My history? You do not. So the word 'valuation' is ridiculous."

What do these curious events reveal? First, that Strathclyde Region is clearly in important respects beyond the authority of the Scottish Office, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Arts Council. All have declared themselves incompetent to deal with this matter internal to what must appear to be the "Stalinist" - the Scottish Region's expression - Republic of Strathclyde. Mr Finlay's call for the intervention of UN Troops is not as odd - in these circumstances - as it seems. A Region, answerable to no one, subject to no higher authority, is invited; and action?

and when Coldstream and Graham Bell painted Bolton, in connection with Tom Harrison's "Worktown" project, they did so from the rooftops. Moreover Coldstream's unpeopled streets reminded one resident, whose opinion was sought, of the two-minute silence on Armistice Day.

If for some "Subject" became merely an exercise in observation, with others its point was hammered home. The talented, Slade-trained Clive Branson adopted the earnest literalism of a naive painter to portray subjects like "Selling the Daily Worker outside Projectile Engineering Works". The caricaturists James Boswell and James Fittion exposed hypocrisy and class mores in their illustrations for the *Left Review*, while others turned their propaganda skills to the making of posters and banners to raise funds for Spain. During the Second World War commissions from the War Artists' Advisory Committee gave certain AIA members further opportunity to record industrial effort. Saire did not die out, but subject matter became more parochial. Edward Ardizzone's "The War in Maida Vale" finds business as usual, save that the pub regulars are now in uniform.

It was the vicissitudes brought by peace, rather than by war, that weakened the AIA. Anxiety over Soviet intentions in Eastern Europe troubled its allegiance to the Peace Movement from 1947 until 1953 when the political clause in its Constitution was deleted. Though it continued as an artists' organization until 1971, its best years were over. The book, published

to coincide with this exhibition, *AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association 1933-53* by Lynda Morris and Robert Radford (96pp. £3.95, 0 905836 35 9), is an invaluable document on the period and substantiates areas that the exhibition cannot adequately represent on account of the destruction or loss of work.

Together book and show suggest that the AIA's importance lay more in what it stood for than in what it produced. It drew attention to the artist's social role and broadened the audience for contemporary art. It organized regional associations and executed murals on boarded-up shop windows and in government-operated restaurants; it published "Everyman Prints", making art as cheap and easily available as a Penguin paperback. When Auden wrote, "all Cézanne's apples I would give away/For a small Goya or a Daumier", many in the AIA were turning their back on modernism and, in their choice of attitude and subject, emulating precisely these heroes. Sadly, a movement that could have produced large-scale public art has left little in the way of lasting monuments. But it did bring to the fore skilled caricaturists and created a climate in which realism could flourish. Two of the most memorable images in the show are Percy Horton's portraits of unemployed men. Low-key and unemphatic, they achieve dignity through restraint, affirming the artist's stated belief, "One must paint from reality and with a human concern".

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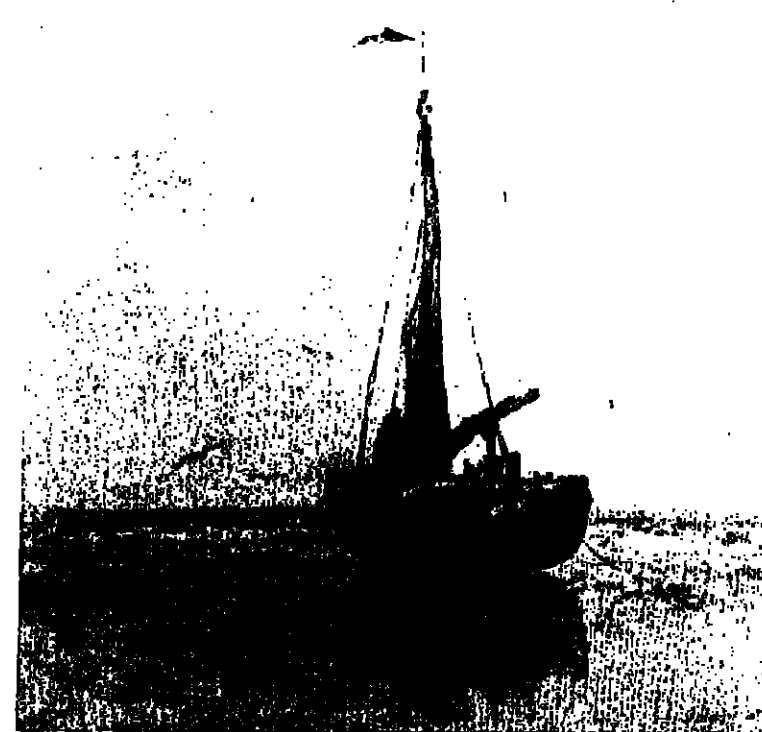
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Oxford
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Jacob Maris's "Fishing Boat" (1878) from the exhibition reviewed here.

Poetical roughage

Peter Kemp

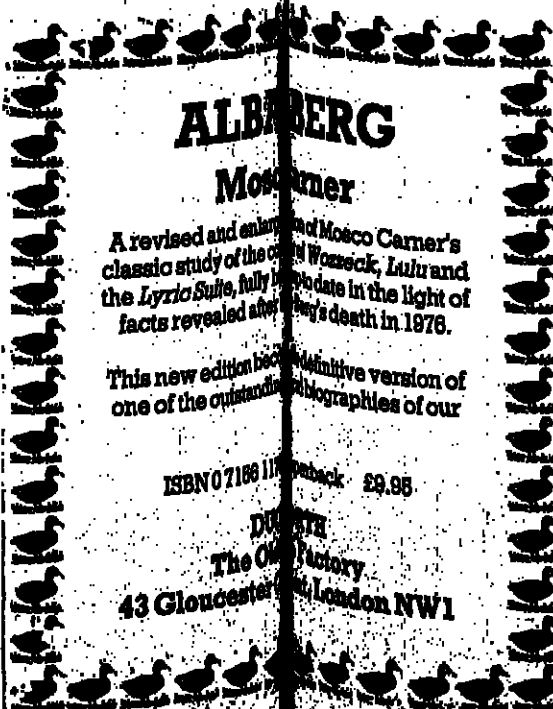
Edible Gold
Channel 4

Edible Gold is that television rarity, a programme that holds a steady focus on literature. Designed to allow poetry to speak for itself, it transmits texts with unusual straightforwardness. Never more than a few minutes long, each programme consists of the reading of a poem or short poems. The format is carefully uncluttered - no "atmospheric" visuals to pull the eye in a different direction from the ear, no reciting "personality" to intrude between the poem and its audience. Never seen, the readers are not even named; the only thing on view - apart from the author's name and dates - is the text of the poem being read. Kept austere, the presentation complements and complements the poetry in assuming that it will supply the necessary richness itself.

Despite a title implying that it will be giving the viewer something valuable to chew over, *Edible Gold* hasn't always shown sterling taste in its selections. The opening piece, for instance, was surprisingly lewd - Basil Bunting's "What the Chairman told Tom". The heavy send-up of the philistine response to poetry - "I want to wash when I meet a poet... What you write is rot" - was presumably chosen to advertise the worth of *Edible Gold*'s subject-matter, but, with its thick vein of crudity, was hardly a valuable sample. Later pieces, fortunately, have shown writers more on their mettle. The great majority of poems chosen, it is noticeable, are ones in which the spoken voice is of importance, tone and even accent of considerable significance. Disappointingly though, while the poems encompass a range of vocal styles, the readers don't. In keeping, perhaps, with the programme's commitment to unobtrusiveness, an almost exaggeratedly neutral manner is maintained, with voices only occasionally rising to some wry half-stress or dropping in a somewhat weary cadence. It's a delivery most appropriate to the kind of poetry *Edible Gold* has displayed a penchant for - that of the 1930s. Two of the first twelve programmes have offered readings from MacNeice. And here the male reader has seemed in his element. His slightly nasal voice, with its rather thin, faintly cracked sound, reminiscent of a 1930s newscaster, proved ideally attuned to the low-keyed, lugubrious lines from *Autumn*.

Poems and voices haven't always synchronised in these programmes: not have the shorter poems been as interestingly linked as they might. Opportunities for comparison and contrast have been almost sedulously neglected. Dorothy Parker's "One Perfect Rose" was put pointlessly alongside Michael Drayton's "Since There's No Help" - though it would have made a neat ironic coupling with Waller's "Go, Lovely Rose" (also in the series, irrelevantly accompanied by Elizabeth Wordsworth's "Good and Clever"). Lewis Carroll's "Father William", arbitrarily partnered by a poem of Emily Dickinson's, might, instead, have been illuminatingly paired with the poem it parodies, Southey's "The Old Man's Comforts".

As with other Channel 4 innovations in approaching literature - *Voices of Shakespeare Lives!* - the potential of an admirable conception hasn't yet been fully realized. With just a bit more working on the nuggets of *Edible Gold* scattered through Channel 4's schedules could give unalloyed pleasure.



APRIL 1983

Robert Hewison

At this time of controversy, a work incontestably from Hitler's hand: a drawing of Ardoye in Flanders, made in 1917, included in a special edition of reproductions of his pictures published in Germany in 1935. It can now be seen in the exhibition reviewed below.

In the meantime, the 1983 literary festival season is under way, with the Cambridge Poetry Festival and Writing 83 at Lancaster already past. The Oxford Poetry Festival follows, from May 7 to 15, and then there is a lull until a newcomer appears on August 20, the Edinburgh Book Festival, a fresh feature of the international festival scene. October is a reminder of the past, with the annual bookshop's bookfests; Bracknell from 7 to 9, Cheltenham from 9 to 16, Kent 19 to 22, and Newcastle from 21 to 30. Birmingham Readers and Writers celebrate from 9 to 20 November, and Essex is announced for May 1, 12, 1984. The literary festivals now have their own literature Festivals council, more information can be had from Pamela Clunies-Ross at the Poetry Society, 21 Earls Court Square, London SW5.

3 This account of the captain's behaviour gave me no advantageous idea of his character; and I could not help lamenting my own fate, that had subjected me to such a commander. However, making a virtue of necessity, I put a good face on the matter, and next day was, with the other pressed men, put on board of the *Thunder*, lying at the Nore.

Tobias Smollett, *Roderick Random*, chapter 24.

The short answer is, in fact, whatsover, since (as I take pains to point out in the Introduction to the book), the owners of a registered

"Among this week's contributors" information, please, appear on

proprietors of trade marks threatened and seek to resort to protection. Is not the Hoover Company flattered when its notably excellent product so dominates the market that its name becomes the generic term? As for sales: if I walk into a showroom and ask, however vaguely, to see the latest range of Hoover, the assistant will presumably show me precisely machines bearing

So much for misrepresentation. I turn now to the groundlessness of the negative remarks found in the review. A satisfactory formulation of the

We regret that, in the published details preceding Erik de Vries' review of *Let Truth Be Told* by Mangell (April 15), the name of the author was incorrectly spelled.

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By force of femininity

L. J. Jordanova

EDWARD SHORTER

A History of Women's Bodies
398pp. Allen Lane. £14.95.
0 7139 1581 1

The view that the human body is socially, culturally and politically significant is no longer novel. It remains unclear, however, how this conviction is best explored by historians for whom the body may appear too abstract a category to be investigated empirically. Significantly, anthropologists, sociologists and literary critics have been far more eager than historians to adopt the approaches to the body largely associated with the writings of Michel Foucault. How would we write a history of the body? It seems to border on absurdity to attempt to fix the most private and individual experiences in the formality of historical narrative, which is normally reserved for more public activities like politics, government and work.

Here, medicine steps in. Medical practitioners see the generally hidden, touch the untouchable, breach taboos which others must respect. They then write about their work, putting into words their reactions to an occupation heavy with complexity and contradiction, thus providing irresistibly attractive sources for those who want to probe the secrets of the past. But these sources carry dangers for the unsuspecting, who take them at face value, and the special rights accorded to medical practitioners increase the dangers, because the relationship between medicine and sexuality is so problematic.

To study the history of the body is one thing; to confine oneself to women's bodies on the grounds that they "have a history of their own", is quite another. This is the project which Edward Shorter has undertaken. The result is disconcerting. By taking women's bodies as a separate object of study, Professor Shorter implies that gender—the dynamic interplay between male and female—is a concept of no particular value. By taking bodies as his main focus he suggests the primacy of physical experience over other aspects of human life.

At the most basic level the book is prudent. Endless descriptions of nasty gynaecological and obstetric disorders

precede coy comments to the effect that the reader's sensibilities will be mercifully spared the worst details—these are known to the author, of course, who hints that he has taken their burden on himself. Such a treatment is, needless to say, particularly well suited to female reproduction and its associated biological functions. Like Shorter's earlier *The Making of the Modern Family*, and, unfortunately, like some other publications on the history of the family, *A History of Women's Bodies* is a naughty and provocative book.

There is, of course, always the possibility that an English reader misunderstands the more vivid qualities of popular North American prose. To adopt this view would, however, be naïve. Shorter is clearly a sophisticated, deeply knowledgeable man who has conscientiously combed archives and libraries in search of new sources on women's health. In other words, he chose to frame his problem, to analyse his sources and to write in the way he does. Readers are entitled to judge the work accordingly, for by making the past speak, the historian carries a responsibility for the words he puts into the mouths of earlier generations. I use the idea of speech advisedly. Shorter believes he is revealing the genuine conditions of ordinary women in "traditional" society by giving them a voice. Whether he has in fact done so is open to doubt. His analytical framework is weak, the sources are haphazardly used and his prejudices are obtrusive enough to hamper historical reasoning.

Ostensibly it is the history of feminism which Shorter seeks to explicate. He looks for "the origins of modern feminism" and finds them in the new woman saved by modern medicine from the poor health which afflicted most women before 1900.

"Traditional" women were further handicapped by their willingness to accept male judgments of their bodies as polluting and inferior. "At the roots of modern feminism lay a fundamental switching of alliances, once women began to cast off this view of themselves. . . . When women began to see femininity as a basically positive rather than a negative force, they left the women's culture behind and sought out men as their major emotional allies"—an interesting explanation for the development of feminism! What it neglects, as does the entire book, are the economic, and political aspects of feminism and of the social conditions of women in the past.

Thus, Shorter has no way of explaining the development of feminism in association with larger political movements, as for example, during the French and Russian Revolutions. Astonishingly, he barely mentions the economic constraints which structured the lives of the vast majority of women, nor does he consider the impact of work, except to tell us that peasant women did back-breaking physical labour—which is not very helpful in understanding nineteenth-century Britain. It is not legitimate to take women's bodies and

separate them from all other aspects of the social processes their owners participated in. It is meaningless to discuss puerperal fever and abortion in detail without also considering child abandonment, infanticide and birth control in general. Pregnancy and attempts to terminate it must be seen in their full social and economic context if we are to get some understanding of why women wished to avoid or limit child-bearing.

There are many analytical weaknesses in the book, such as the use of the ideas of "traditional" society and

"women's culture". Most serious is Shorter's unwillingness to admit that medical testimony, like statistics, requires interpretation of a subtle kind. It is quite unacceptable to quote, apparently quite randomly, from sources written between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, in Europe and North America, by government officials, midwives, medical practitioners of all kinds, ethnologists and historians, as if they were all equivalent. Every student of the history of medicine knows that midwives writing about doctors, or anyone writing about "quacks", must be treated with the greatest care. Analysing such sources requires essential historical skills of textual criticism and informed perception, not to that of the anthropologist. Shorter acknowledges the value of other. On the contrary, when he makes statements like "imagining the uterus as a live animal presupposed an enormous peasant ignorance of anatomy", he removes the need to interpret other cultures at all. Henceforth, "traditional" beliefs and practices can be put down to sheer ignorance.

Historical changes in sexual and family practices are rooted in changes in the meaning of social behaviour. This is the level which Shorter neglects yet which matters to us. *A History of Women's Bodies* may be seen as a feminist tract, but it is not. Not because its author is male but because the subject of the book is treated as a physical object. Rather than explicitly acknowledge the inherent difficulties in understanding the relationship between health, family life and sexuality, Shorter is carried away by a fascination with female anatomy, especially in its pathological state.

We should not doubt the historical importance of the body, for no less a historian than Michelet recognized that the special suffering of working women in mid-nineteenth century France revealed itself in their physiological condition, and, above all, through autopsy. Common sense confirms his view, for we all use physical appearance as a source of clues about class, age and status. Science and medicine have long sought to develop systematic theories which make the body comprehensible. But to understand the social history of the body in addition to ideas about it, historians must consider both men and women, minds in addition to bodies, social processes as well as individual disease.



This illustration for Spigelius's *De formatu foetu* (Padua, 1626) is included in Medical Book Illustration: A Short History (142pp. Cambridge: Olander, £15. 0 906672 07 4) by John L. Thornton and Carol Reeves.

Beware of the forceps

Roy Porter

BERNARD THIS

La Requête des Enfants à Naître
257pp. Paris: Seuil. 69fr.
2 02 006036 9

Bernard This's point of departure in this rum book is a brace of intriguing tracts in the history of midwifery. One, dating from 1751, announces itself as the *Petition of the Unborn Babies to the Council of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, in which, pleading in due legal form, on behalf of themselves and their mothers, the fetuses arraign the midwives, armed with forceps and other deadly weapons for their massacre of the innocents. The other tract, from the 1780s, is the *Requête en Plainte Présentée à Nosseigneurs des Etais du Languedoc par les Enfants à Naître contre les Prétendus Sages Femmes*. Here, by contrast, the cry of the French unborn denounces country midwives for their lethal ignorance and ineptitude.

For a regular historian many avenues of inquiry would lead out from these texts. A scrutiny of their authors, for instance: how old Dr Frank Nicholls, former anatomy lecturer in Oxford and now society physician, come to pen the *Petition*? Or an inquiry into their impact (Is the *Petition* really an anti-accoucheur

volley, or merely a skit, laboured in its donnish facetiousness?). Or what about the genre? Did the Enlightenment commonly put words into the mouths of unborn babes and sucklings? Do we catch echoes here, for example, of Richard Steele's famous "first-person," child's-eye commentary on parturition? Or another inspiration for *Tristram Shandy*?

In fact, Dr This does none of this. Rather, he has written a harangue which is by turns a treatise, a rodomontade, a forensic declamation, and an optical illusion. He uses his accusatory texts as pegs on which to hang his own "accusé", an indictment of the psychopathology of midwifery writing, of historians' massacre of the innocent dead. This constantly reminds us that he, of course, is writing no ordinary, let alone morbid—fabrication of the past. Though his passions have been fired, he tells us—by the scent of the quarry, he is proud that his book is the work of an intoxicated month snatched from the calls of his regular professional duties as a psychoanalyst, written far from decent libraries (which may account for his appallingly garbled English—he does not once quote the title of the *Petition* correctly, and renders its subtitle as "Wiche is fest to employ in Cases of Pregnancy and Lying in a Man-Midwife or a Midwife"). Exasperatingly, This has no qualms about tailoring history to fit the grand Lacanian schema (Nature/

culture = *nafre/couture* = midwifery/surgery, etc), while feeling quite unabashed at not referring to a single English-language work of scholarship in the half of the book which claims to rethink the history of British midwifery.

The outcome is a text which is continually demanding attention (now This button-holes "mes chers historiens", now "mes pauvres obstétriciens"). But its bizarreness as a work of history—its outrageous refusal to research the researches of others, such as Jean-Serge Carles and F. Hacquin—is precisely This's point. For his thesis is that extant histories of midwifery are actually grotesque, psychopathological farragos of nonsense. Look at the great tradition of chronicles of childbirth—authors such as Siebold, Dumont and Morel, Pecker and Roulland—and what do you find but prejudices, panegyrics, distillates, wish fulfilments, lies about lying in? They are testaments of credulity, naivety and a moral numbness, as when William Hunter, who warned against unnecessary use of forceps, is condemned for that reason by Dumont and Morel as a mediocre obstetrician; or when the Renaissance surgeon, Rousset, is given the palm for pioneering caesarian sections at a time when the operation was fatal without exception to the mother, and when his preoccupation as a good Catholic was to baptise the infant. What we are reading is not scholarship but symptoms.

This is right. Traditional histories of midwifery certainly had the knife out, and the battle has now been joined in a theatre of war which This doesn't even mention. For it has become part of the feminist debate. Standard midwifery history told the tale of a great humanitarian escape from the benighted clutches of granny midwives into the promised land of surgical obstetrics. Feminist historians have inverted all that. The old midwives were safest. They practised "natural childbirth", and mothers gave birth (according to Suzanne Arms) "without fear", "without what we call pain". Then came what Margaret Conor Veralluysen has dubbed "the medical conquest of midwifery", with its "usually fatal" forceps, which signalled "the exploitation of women by upwardly mobile males" (Romalis). In his *A History of Women's Bodies*, reviewed above, Edward Shorter has repudiated all of that. Mythologizing is as rampant as ever.

Dr This ignores this, but he does examine the physician-dramatist Jean-François Saccombe (smuggled into the text because This has a hunch that he might be the author of the *Requête*). If Saccombe was the author, he clearly felt blind antipathy towards the *sages-femmes*. But in his turn, he has been pilloried by historians for his vilification of surgeon-obstetricians in the age of Napoleon (Bonaparte = good birth, insists This). In turn, Baudelocque mythologized the progress of obstetrics as a series of

heroic surgical leaps forward, pre-eminently the development of the caesarian (from Caesar = emperor; Baudelocque's unconscious had imperial longings. This explains Saccombe's lampooned all this in a battery of anti-caesarian plays, poems and journals. Baudelocque used for defamation—and won: Saccombe mortified. Till now, the historians have also been with Baudelocque, viewing Saccombe as a jealous guttersnipe. This will have none of this: the costume drama of historians playing hanging-judge is absurd, domesticates the act, silencing Saccombe, rising to Saccombe's rhetoric and suggesting, in its Lacanian way, that our consciousness may need these comforting, short-circuiting conceptual dichotomies, the ready-made cliché.

At this point, the well-drilled historian, assailed by slippery Whiggish, cautionary tales, "enough of declamation, give me objectivity!", and heads back to the sources. I don't think Dr This believes in this possibility. He certainly hasn't taken a season-ticket to his own history. His trip rather is into his passions and mythopoeic powers of the mind. As a suggestive experiment on the compulsion to write history, and even as a piece of white-noise evocation, one can say This's book: *c'est magnifique, mais on n'a rien à y faire*. What we want, as to add, *mais ce n'est pas* This's.

STORY

Looking for a top to the pyramid

J. P. Kenyon

JOHN BARRELL

English Literature in History 1730-1840
Ed. Asa Briggs, Wide Survey
3pp. Hutchinson. £13.50.
0 245520 1

The general editor of this new series of "English Literature and History", Professor Williams, has invited a number of literary critics to select two periods and use them to explore in some depth "the relations between social and actual historical conditions". John Barrell's selection is on "conditions" rather than events, and he chooses as his examples the poems of James Smollett's *Roderick Random*, and the eighteenth-century state on language, particularly Barrell's contribution to it.

He identifies a number of recurring themes, which establish the framework of the book. In the eighteenth-century England, the process of industrialization and the increasing complexity of society had begun to pose them. It is unfortunate that Barrell chooses to analyse these poems in the edition of 1744, when Walpole had fallen; I would have liked to have seen an examination of the first editions of 1727-30. For the standpoint was entirely different. In the early years of George II's reign Walpole's supreme authority was not yet established and there was some prospect of frustrating him. By 1744 Walpole had done his worst, and the opposition had been unable to prevent the continuation of his old, corrupt system of political management under Henry Pelham. In other words, Thomson's assemblage of pastoral aristocrats had proved singularly ineffectual, and this poem, that doubtful ambiguity of the past, that doubling paradox which Barrell expresses as follows:

If the ability of a gentleman to judge impartially tends to exercise his virtues depends on his vision of the whole, and if that vision depends in turn on his retirement, or at least on a detachment from the field of political conflict, then to descend into that field to pacify and regulate the contestants was surely to resign the detachment which enabled him

eminence of their stately homes and finding it good. But, as Barrell points out, the smoke of the nearest town is always on their horizon, and it is not clear whether this is or is not part of their "equal, wide survey". Certainly they and the poet both lament the insidious spread of institutionalized corruption which threatens their environment. So, Thomson's gentleman appears at one and the same time "as the benevolent observer of Britain's happiness, who tells us that the nation is in no need of social or political re-arrangement, and as the stern bulwark against corruption, who informs us that his virtues, and his alone, can rescue a nation in decline".

The specific gentlemen Thomson addresses constitute a powerful group of politicians—Lytelton, Bubb Dodginton, Onslow and Wilmington, plus Cobham, Chesterfield and Cornbury—who were all in varying degrees opposed to Sir Robert Walpole, and all in some sense spokesmen for a "country" attitude towards court and government. Yet, although they all possessed landed estates as of course, they are more familiar to us as dynamic metropolitan politicians than in the stately-state past. Thomson assigns to them. It is unfortunate that Barrell chooses to analyse these poems in the edition of 1744, when Walpole had fallen; I would have liked to have seen an examination of the first editions of 1727-30. For the standpoint was entirely different. In the early years of George II's reign Walpole's supreme authority was not yet established and there was some prospect of frustrating him. By 1744 Walpole had done his worst, and the opposition had been unable to prevent the continuation of his old, corrupt system of political management under Henry Pelham. In other words, Thomson's assemblage of pastoral aristocrats had proved singularly ineffectual, and this poem, that doubtful ambiguity of the past, that doubling paradox which Barrell expresses as follows:

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to know how they should be regulated.

But if this is an excuse, then it is one that negates all political action. In fact, the basic reason for Walpole's singular success is that a majority of the governing classes accepted the argument, put by Thomson himself, that under him England was a flourishing and improving society, and rejected the paradoxical corollary, heavily implied by Thomson, that at the same time it was a prey to corruption and strife. Thomson tries to evade the problem, but further identifies it, by choosing as his ultimate gentleman-hero Tsr Peter the Great, who was as far removed from men like George Lytelton or the Earl of Chesterfield as it was possible to be, whose selection was tantamount to a vote of no-confidence in them.

The message of his later poem, *The Castle of Indolence*, is even more ambiguous, and though his picture of wealthy aristocratic life is highly laudatory in a material sense, even envious, he leaves us in little doubt that while the Castle offers "a refuge from a society divided by competing interests and thus an opportunity to step out of history", such disinterestedness is purchased at a high price. Perhaps an effective statesman cannot "step out of history". The hero of the poem is the "Knight of Industry", who, like Peter the Great, not only has some of the ironic detachment of a landed gentleman but has also laboured extensively in a mechanic capacity and has mastered the skills of armed combat—"a quite improbably unbarrel and laborious gentleman", as Barrell says, "who does everything, not nothing".

John Dyer was to take this practical emphasis a stage further. In *The Fleecce* he represents the woolen industry as a corporate effort in which humble weavers and shepherds, wealthy merchants and noble landowners join their labours one with another, each of them essential to the finished product. With Smollett, however, we return to the concept of *homo universalis*. We are left in no doubt that Roderick Random's picaresque adventures among the lower classes, his wide experience of a variety of occupations, many of them mean and sordid, have given him a better grasp of society than he could ever have acquired through a more conventional upbringing, and when at

the end of the novel he returns to the rank of gentleman to which he had been born he is much better equipped to carry out the functions appropriate to his station.

Johnson, however, dismissed Dyer with lofty contempt. "The meanness naturally adhering, and the irreverence habitually annexed to trade and manufacture", he said, "sink him under insuperable oppression". One of the most interesting aspects of eighteenth-century culture is the conscious effort made to stabilize the language, to protect it against the corruptions of the vulgar on the one hand and the innovations of the grammarians on the other. Johnson's use of the word "irreverence" is significant; in an interesting and thoughtful essay Barrell shows that to pundits like him language was a political and social, not just a literary weapon.

According to them the English language, like the laws, stemmed from the natural genius of the people, and was sufficiently established by customary usage. Like the laws it had evolved with the free consent of all, and it was not to be tampered with or subjected to abstract rules. But it is clear that what the eighteenth century called "common" and we would call "standard" English was not common at all; it may have unified Britain nationally, but it divided it socially. It was designed to iron out provincial and class variations, but in doing so it emphasized their social unacceptability. The role of the gentleman was crucial here as elsewhere. Leisure was necessary to the refinement of language, and total freedom from mechanic occupations or class intermingling, so that gentlemen were preferred even to professional authors as guardians of the linguistic temple: "Such polite and independent speakers and writers, in obeying the laws of language, made them; in making them, they obeyed them."

For it was the contention of Johnson and his like that discussion of words, particularly in politics, was dangerous; thus the purpose of his *Dictionary* was stabilization rather than change. There was a tacit acceptance of a meaning, which transcended discussion. "Common" and accepted usage confirmed the splendid ambiguity of words like "consent", "representation" or "the

people", and Englishmen should be equally content with the government they had and the language which described it. In this context the establishment of an Academy on the French model would be positively dangerous, and grammarians like Robert Nares commonly spoke as if the language were under siege. However, by the turn of the century radical criticism and academic reformism had been repulsed, and language usage was firmly established as a class indicator. In Barrell's words: "At the same time as it offered a notional cultural equality to men of all classes, if they could speak the language, it confirmed the power of those who could speak it over those who could not, and it continues to do so."

I hope I have made it clear that this is a subtle and difficult but at the same time a very stimulating book, and no review of this length can hope to cover all the points it raises. However, it does lack a clear central focus, and it is perhaps in need of some preliminary or closing discussion. What we are dealing with here is the search for a ruling class, evident in other aspects of eighteenth-century life. The revolution of 1688, together with the public inactivity of the Hanoverians, had deprived the nation of the unitary focus of monarchy, nor had it provided an alternative focus through some kind of presidential government; in fact, eighteenth-century British society resembles a truncated pyramid. This partly explains, I am sure, the success of substitute national leaders like Walpole and Chatham, and it may explain Thomson's extraordinary hankering after Peter the Great, too. (The Tsar bears some resemblance to Charles II.) The alternative was social leadership by a diffused upper class, which would govern by acceptance and example rather than force; but the British aristocracy was too small in number for this function, and the legal definition of a gentleman too broad, as well as vague. What Barrell's authors are trying to do is to define a new ruling class based on a new concept of the gentleman, and this was a difficult task in a society which was nominally free and equal. This is implicit in his analysis, but it needs to be brought out, together with the fact that this was not just an exercise in speculative elitism but an urgent necessity of government, as the French Revolution was to show.

Louis's liaisons

Brian Fothergill

Lucy Norton

The Sun King and his Lover
3pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0 245520 1

Book of little more than 150 pages on the subject of Louis XIV and his mistress, the subject of Louis XIV and his mistress might not, at first sight, raise much interest; but Lucy Norton, whose selection and translation of the memoirs of Saint-Simon has established her reputation as an authority on the period, brings to us a detailed and detailed knowledge of Versailles and a close familiarity with the characters and personalities who clustered round the Sun King, that give particular charm to what is a familiar story. Unlike Saint-Simon, a man whose loyalties, which were strong, were only outweighed by his prejudices, which were violent, Miss Norton maintains an admirable detachment, not least in her assessment of the king whose heart, as she tells us in her first paragraph, was essentially cold and selfish.

The Château of Versailles is itself presented as one of the king's loves, and this is surely correct, for its elegant and embellishment from the small hunting-lodge he had inherited from his father to the vast, splendid palace that ultimately housed the entire court and administration of France was one of the greatest, and possibly the most important, of the passions in Louis's life.

We see the king obsessed by his vision of the splendour of it all while the disenchanted Colbert stands ominously in the background despairingly counting the cost. It was there, when Louis had ordered a pageant of *The Triumph of Bacchus* to inaugurate his plans for the extension of the château and also to celebrate the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, that Norton describes how the king sat down with his mistress Louise de La Vallière while lower down the table were placed Athénais de Montespan with the widow Scarron, afterwards Marquise de Maintenon, and several other ladies. To remind themselves that "had they realized it, they saw the past, present, and future sitting together at the same table".

Of these three women Louise de La Vallière is perhaps the most pathetic. She lacked the steely ambition and calculating avarice of the Montespan and the sense of mission that sustained Mme de Maintenon; her heart was given to the king but it was never really in the business of being royal mistress, and when she eventually retired to a convent she did it with a genuine sense of relief. Like Louis's Spanish Habsburg wife she was unable to respond to his thirst for glory and could not cast herself in a heroic role. Athénais de Montespan had no such inhibitions. She was the archetypal *femme fatale*, greedy word to Mme de Montespan, as Miss Norton writes: "she desired it for the king her sovereign, but fully intended to make it with him and, in the meanwhile, to do everything that added to her own grandeur and the huge private fortune

that she was accumulating." When she feared that she was losing the king's affection she was not above resorting to the black arts, dispensing love-philtres to the king and, so it was rumoured, poison to her enemies.

Louis did not allow his mistresses to interfere in politics. With Mme de Maintenon, however, it was a different matter. For one thing, she was not a mistress but the king's legal wife, though never publicly acknowledged as such. After the storms and near scandals of the Montespan's reign and the death of the king's mistress, the neglected queen, Louis turned to the quiet domesticity of life with Mme de Maintenon with evident relief. The somewhat equivocal position she occupied as the king's left-handed wife gave her the opportunity she had always sought to reform the royal morals, and her influence was felt in affairs of state, especially in relation to church matters and episcopal appointments; but she found her marital duties irksome and was bored and weary by the king's excessive sexual demands. With her régime much of the gaiety fled from Versailles, though this was no less due, towards the end, to the disasters of the War of the Spanish Succession than to her puritan proclivities. She found little comfort in a marriage that could only be acknowledged behind closed doors. Her status as morganatic wife was known to so few people, and the secret so closely guarded, that many courtiers, including members of the royal family, viewed her with hatred and contempt. Madame, sister-in-law, referred to her privately as "the old

trollop" or "the old whore", declaring that if she joined the king in heaven he would gladly hand her back to her first husband, the poet Scarron. When the king's daughters visited her rooms they were often observed to leave them in tears after a stern rebuke from the former governess who was now their stepmother. As a ray of light suddenly appeared when the eleven-year-old Marie Adelaide of Savoy arrived at court as the bride-elect of the king's grandson, the duc de Bourgogne. Both Marie and Louise de La Vallière lost their hearts to this sprightly princess, and her untimely death in 1712 left them both desolate.

Lucy Norton's picture of Versailles is a vivid one, illuminated by many perceptive comments, like her description of the now plous and ageing Louis XIV within the embodiment of whose majesty "there lurked a frightened little man, so fearful of his ultimate destiny that he dared not take a step without the approval of his elderly wife". The book is well produced and the ninety-five illustrations are carefully chosen to augment the text.

A critical edition of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Ulrich H. Hardt, has recently been published (574pp. New York: Whittaker Publishing Company. 0 37875 212 9). The *Vindication* has since 1792 "suffered over a thousand non-authoritative readings, over 140 of them significantly distorting the meaning of the book. Professor Hardt aims to put this right.

Issues in the Islamic Movement

EDITED BY KALIM SIDDIQUI

The second (1981-82) volume of this highly successful annual anthology of articles reflecting the worldwide of Islam is now out. In his 12,000-word introduction the editor, Dr Kalim Siddiqui, begins the task of describing the multi-dimensional reality of the Islamic movement. The aim, he says, is to put together, piece by piece, an analytical and operational model of the Islamic movement.

This result is perhaps the most exciting, inspiring and provocative survey on the Islamic movement, the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic State being written at the present time.

There are 104 articles, a glossary, and an extensive index: pp 408. ISBN 0-905081-13-7 Hbk £18.95. ISBN 0-905081-14-5 Pbk £ 8.95. Order from any bookstore or from THE OPEN PRESS LTD, 8 Enfield Avenue, London WC1H 9DS.

Scene and sensibility

Graham Reynolds

LOUIS HAWES

Presence of Nature: British Landscape 1780-1830
214pp, with illustrations.
Yale University Press on behalf of
Yale Center for British Art, New
Haven. £20 (paperback, £8.95).
0 300 02920 6

GERALD WILKINSON

Turner on Landscape: The Liber
Studiosium
128pp, with illustrations. Barrie and
Jenkins. £16.
0 09 14403 5

The British expressed their love of nature in literature long before their pastoral enthusiasm was revealed in their painting. We need go no further back than the seventeenth century to find a rich array of verse and prose which conveys the author's delight in the countryside. But it was not till the middle of the eighteenth century that this national tendency was reflected in the pictorial arts. Wilson and Galsworthy were true originators, and were followed by a stream of artists who, by depicting the nature around them, conveyed their deep enjoyment of its appearance and its moods.

Louis Hawes has adopted a novel way of illustrating this sudden flowering of the national school of

landscape painting. He has chosen some 160 paintings and watercolours, landscapes of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries, from the collections of the Yale Center for British Art. These he has grouped under six themes: mountain landscapes, coastal scenes, ruin landscapes, rural landscapes, landscapes with labourers and townscapes. He has omitted four other potential themes: seascapes and country house portraits, because they have recently been the subject of exhibitions at Yale; exotic and historic landscapes because they are not adequately represented in the collections. *Presence of Nature*, which accompanies his selection, is considerably more than an exhibition catalogue. He has prefaced his full and judicious entries with a lucid introduction in which he examines the origin and development of his six groups. He studies with ample literary illustration the growth of taste for mountain scenery and ruins, and traces the switch in sensibility which underlay the Romantic Movement. By showing that an additional understanding can be gained by arranging these paintings thematically he has made an important contribution to the study of this aspect of British art.

Much in his system of classification was familiar to seventeenth-century writers. Milton divided up the types of landscape by judging whether they promoted mirth or melancholy. He associated russet lawns, grey fallows, trim meadows and shallow brooks with the jocund nymph of "L'Allegro",

while twilight groves, murmuring waters, and lonely cloisters were the natural haunt of the sage goddess of melancholy. The parallel between these themes and those adopted by Hawes shows that they correspond to fundamental traits of temperament.

The thinkers of the eighteenth century embarked on a lively analysis of the impact of nature on the senses and emotions. Hawes shows how the writings of Shaftesbury, Addison and Burke reveal progressive stages in the acceptance of mountains as embodiments of the sublime. Concurrently James Thomson achieved in *The Seasons* a response to the emotional effect of scenic phenomena so fundamental that the Romantic artists referred to him rather than to the Lake Poets for quotations which expressed their intentions. Painters also classified the subject-matter of their art. Alexander Cozens, described by William Beckford as being "as full of systems as the universe" codified trees, clouds and the various types of composition in nature. It is fitting that the section on mountains in this exhibition should have been dominated by the watercolours of his son John Robert Cozens. But while Milton associated mountains with the bracing jollity of his jocund nymph, J. R. Cozens found in them a reflection of his own unquiet spirit and profound melancholy.

Hawes makes the valid point that continental painters concentrated on classical ruins, while British artists were more concerned with the native ruins so liberally provided by Henry

VIII and Cromwell. None the less, watercolours of the Colosseum, the Claudian aqueduct and other time-worn relics by Pars, Towne and "Warwick" Smith are included in his selection and evoke those sentiments of the transitory character of greatness which led Gibbon, seeing these ruins, to embark on his history of the fall of Rome. The most impressive painting in this group is Constable's "Hadleigh Castle". This may seem strange in view of the artist's frequent assertions that he valued only health and vigour, and disliked stagnation and autumnal decay. But special reasons enhanced the emotional force of this painting. Constable was mourning the early death of his wife and his distress, combined with his failure to gain proper recognition, led him to regard this ruin as the symbol of his own life.

He figures more predictably as the chief exponent of rural landscape. However his opinion that pastoral landscape was the most lovely as well as the most difficult department of painting was not shared by the theorists of picturesque taste. Hawes cites Gilpin's pronouncement that "on canvas, hedge-row elms, furrowed lands, meadows . . . and hayfields adorned with mowers have a bad effect. . . . Of all species of cultivation, cornlands are the most unpicturesque. The regularity of corn-fields disgusts", thus utterly rejecting the basic subject-matter of Constable's art.

Hawes's new category of "Landscapes with Labourers" includes scenes of industrial activity, such as Turner's "Limekiln at Coalbrookdale" and De Louthborough's "View near Matlock". Other paintings in this section are only marginally differentiated from the purely rural by the slightly more prominent presence of the figures. I think Hawes is wrong to question Constable's right to quote "with smiling brow the ploughman cleaves his way" in the title of his "Ploughing Scene in Suffolk". The author of the lines, Robert Bloomfield, had been a farmer's boy, and knew what he was talking about. Equally Constable, as a dyed-in-the-wool countryman, would have been fully aware that ploughmen, or more properly horsemen, were a proud and independent breed who took great pride in their work. The ploughman would have been smiling because he liked lighting in the regularity of his Suffolk furrows, and because he felt in harmony with nature and his team of horses, which were his constant responsibility.

Hawes disclaims any intention of

drawing excessively rigid lines of demarcation. Clearly some of his choice could be placed under other headings. Copley Fielding's "Scene on the coast, Merionethshire" which makes such a dramatic cover and out-coast scene and a ruin painting as well as a coast scene. But by achieving categories Hawes has clarified the complex history of the emergence of landscape as a dominant genre in nineteenth-century British painting. It triumphed over history painting and the Grand Manner because it engaged human sympathies on so many different levels.

Turner is the only artist to be represented in all six groups at Yale. Not only did he aspire to take all known modes of painting as his province; he himself made a systematic classification of types of landscape. His division into pastoral, epic pastoral, marine, architectural, mountain, and historical landscape has obvious affinities with the scheme underlying *Presence of Nature*. Turner on Landscape is an examination by Gerald Wilkinson of the "Liber Studiosium" in which Turner demonstrated his analysis. Wilkinson confesses that he felt initial dislike for the engravings of the "Liber" and says that his subsequent enthusiasm came from discerning a deeper meaning in the publication. He suggests that each single part of five prints has a unifying theme; for instance that the first print illustrates "bridges and connections", the third "solid geometry". If valuing the Liber depends on accepting this thesis I fear it is doomed. Indeed for many of Turner's admirers it must always remain a mystery how he, who was so responsive to the finest nuances in oil or watercolour, could tolerate, let alone propagate, the coarse outline, the insensitive chiaroscuro, and the banal printing of these depressing plates.

A pictorial index, in which all of plates can be seen in one opening, is a useful feature of this book. It reveals that the search for a unifying theme in each published part is as chimerical as the search for the golden section, which the author also discerns in Turner's compositions. It does however establish that Turner was fairly consistent in representing most of his categories in each part. All in all, this study will not convince those who believe that Constable was right to call Turner's publication the "Liber Stupidorum".

considerable critical success. DeWint seems to have been rather aloof and uncommunicative, and the details of his life remain obscure. This is the first full-scale study for nearly a century, and it provides an ample and excellent framework for the understanding of the painter's career, difficult as it is to reconstruct on the basis of the words alone, whose chronology is only just beginning to be unravelled. Smith is happiest when he is dealing with the chief subject; his handling of the painter's aesthetic and social context is less secure, but it is also very brief. Since direct or circumstantial information about the artist's life is so scarce, more might have been made of the connection with DeWint's close friend and, later, brother-in-law, William Hilton, a history-painter whose own watercolour sketches of landscapes have a decidedly DeWint-like breadth, and whose visit to Italy in 1825, recently examined by Martin Pointon (*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XXXV, 1972), throws some light on the style of DeWint's most ambitious watercolour, the "Elijah" exhibited four years later, but now known only through preparatory studies. Hilton was overwhelmed by the beauty of the Italian landscape, which he interpreted in very much in terms of Claude, and it was to Franco-Roman models of that type that DeWint looked for the exceptional work. Peter DeWint is marred by some poor proof-reading and by the small size and muddy definition of many of the illustrations.

Freshest fieldscapes

John Gage

HAMMOND SMITH

Peter DeWint 1784-1849
195pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. F. Lewis. £35.
0 85317 057 6

Of all the masters of the great age of English watercolour painting, Peter DeWint is perhaps the purest exponent of that medium. In his finest works the rich, saturated washes brushed firmly on to a rugged and absorbent paper, bloomy and undisturbed, and wholly the product of the dry or loaded brush, seem to us to be the quintessence of that fascinating technique which, when he applied it to oils, seems vivid and contrived. DeWint was, with Cotman, the truest heir of Thomas Girtin, but far more even than Girtin or Cotman, he took watercolour away from topography and into a more expansive view of the landscape as above all a matter of light and breezes, of earth, air and water, of flora and fauna. He was one of the most travelled of English landscape artists, and this, paradoxically, gives a certain placelessness to his work, expressed in an entirely non-Illusionistic manner. It is especially apt that DeWint should have given his name to a painting material: a type of coarse watercolour paper.

Contemporary admirers, like the poet, John Clare and, later, Ruskin,

felt that the secret of this freshness was DeWint's practice of painting out of doors: Clare begged the painter for one of those rough sketches taken in the fields that breathes with the living freshness of open air and sunshine where the blending and harmony of earth air and sky are in such happy union of greens and greys that a flat bit of scenery on a few inches a paper appear [sic] so many miles . . .

And Ruskin, who seems to have known the artist well, held that DeWint "hardly ever paints except 'from nature'". But Hammond Smith, in this fine study, shows that it was not quite as simple as that. DeWint seems to have avoided those refinements in the development of the medium of watercolour in his day which would have made on-the-spot sketching easier, for he rarely practised it. It is certainly difficult to see how he could have laid his liquid and direct washes without placing his stretched paper flat, and free from the winds and animal disturbances of outdoor work. The larger drawings were always studio productions, and in the memoir by his wife, which is usefully reprinted in the present book, it is stated that DeWint "commenced his drawings on a Friday" (his lucky day), which suggests that the cunning manipulation of washes extended over a protracted period.

In spite of the distinction of his work, his varied and extensive clientele as a teacher, and a

A Legacy

On my fiftieth birthday

By Anne Stevenson

When I was a hundred, eighty-three,
in fifty, young in wisdom though
The old to quarrel with poverty,
I'll give me grit to write as if
I were the object, not the show
In reputation in this life.

In my fathers' name, profess
I'll give me grit to write as if
I were the object, not the show
In reputation in this life.

In my mothers' memory
I'll give me grit to write as if
I were the object, not the show
In reputation in this life.

Still, if I had to say which were
The saddest of my salad years,
The time I'd give back, with a purr,
To some great *Laurel* in the spheres,
I think I'd weep Glaswegian tears
For Tom and Liz and Angus, whose
Subversive talents warmed their beers
And talked the curse off college booze.

By Tentsmair's Tayport, where the Tay
Spills out in salty, spatulate
Redundancies of tidal clay,
I buried all that out-of-date
Hysteria of want and hate.
In Fife I count among my friends
The spumey bay, the slanted light -
Ablutions for us puritans.

To Andrew Motion, any fame
That to my thin books may adhere
Like sheep's wool to a barbed-wire name.
Turner, my reputation for
High-down frigidity to Fleur
Who in the Oxford lists has been
The lady apt to prefer
The wild to the saccharine.

To Elaine and Reid (the Martian lot)
My recipe for onion soup,
That fresh peas may be spared the pot
And treated as befits the group
From autumn, well brought up,
With simple, short, three-minute heating,
Served on *beurre*, but sans *trop* trope,
I can be delicious eating.

Smith is Gutenberg there snore
Every onion stows
In layers and layers of metaphor;
You boil them out like stains from clothes
Before you add the salt and Beau-
tiful. But why should I repeat
What every kitchen poet knows?
Spice well, and throw away the meat.

And, since the boys have set up court
So quaintly in the scullery,
We girls, why not may now depart
To sit in the academy.
Here is the grill, the sink, the tea,
The colander to catch the drips.
And here's (for an emergency)
That thing we use to time the eggs.

Do wait. I'll turn and name the rich
Accumulations of my plate.
From Donald Hall (Ann Arbor, Mich.)
I learned my trade. To him, too late,
I gave my green, inebrate
Midwestern anxieties to please.
My appetite for appetite,
My love affair with Lymeswold cheese.

To Glasgow - how I curse the place -
I have a midden of regrets,
A name I should have worn with grace
Shed out in bitter cigarettes.
No poem can rectify the debts
My madness, mixed with alcohol,
Incurred in sundry tenements
Among the academic brawl.

And yet, if I can make my peace
With Philip Hobsbaum, in whose book
No Structuralism found increase
Nor foolish Hermeneutic took
The liberty of playing hook
To literary accolades -
Well, then I will. He never took
His flag down from the barricades.

Still, if I had to say which were
The saddest of my salad years,
The time I'd give back, with a purr,
To some great *Laurel* in the spheres,
I think I'd weep Glaswegian tears
For Tom and Liz and Angus, whose
Subversive talents warmed their beers
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By Tentsmair's Tayport, where the Tay
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Redundancies of tidal clay,
I buried all that out-of-date
Hysteria of want and hate.
In Fife I count among my friends
The spumey bay, the slanted light -
Ablutions for us puritans.

To Geoffrey Dutton, Alan Wall,
Anne, Ellie, Monty, dour Bill Tait
Who outdrank and out-owled us all,
Those *Seagate* days I celebrate
From David's Fort to Nethergate.
Down here I can't use all my vice;
I'll leave you half, in case some fate
Decides Dundee deserves me twice.

To Douglas Dunn, who was a Scot
Before he was a poet - eyes
To see that what the North East's got
Is pride, deep humour - and those sties
His desperate young consider right
To fight inside, or patronize.
Notice Orion, though, at night.

Or watch the shelduck, dunlin, terns
Perform their ritual antic dance
Where water meets the sand and churns
On every beachy prominence
Topographies of innocence.
You call me a Romantic? I'm
Too old to frown or take offence.
We live in a diminished time.

The minor English slip their verse
From sherry glasses as they talk.
Fearful of spirit, they endorse
The safe and unpretentious bloke
Who slips a knowing little joke
Between big gulps of mum and dad
And nips of sweetened back-yard folk.
I wish the outlandish were so mild.

Something in poetry goes wrong
When poets tacitly agree
There's nothing more to say in song.
Our journalists and linguists' plea:
For unrestricted novelty
Shores up the bits, but shreds the whole.
O where is that great-rooted tree
Yeats made a symbol of the soul?

To Peter and Penelope
Whose wise, outlandish confidence
In holiness and witchery
Upbraid the Postivist sense
That's peddled in the TLS.
I leave one caution: Satan makes
A plausible honey in his nest;
Don't treat him like a friend of Blake's.

Near Hay I think Traherne and Vaughan
Are angels in that border air.
My jealous, butting Oxford tongue
Dried up while I was living there.
My *paucere* *ane* began to tear
The bars down from inside its cage.
And black theatrical despair
Rose like a curtain from a stage.

I don't mean evil isn't real.
Dear God, things hardly could be worse.
The tragedy is that we feel
Important when we preach in verse
Or march to mitigate the curse
Of mass greed, hatred and the Bomb.
We fear a vacant universe,
Yet Yeats's Chinamen were calm.

To Roger Garfit, all my strolls
Along the Wye - to write his book.
(To Flah and Spark, the rabbit holes
Poor Guinness wistfully forsook.)
Glenn Storhaug, once you undertook
To speak in printing, you became
So indisputable you put
Commercial publishing to shame.

From every proof you pull, I learn.
Dear friend, I leave you and your press
This deep-sworn promise to return.
To Alan Halsey, too, success
For poetry. And happiness
In *Broad Street's* number twenty-two.
(I hope we never have to moss
With real estate again, don't you?)

To John, my son, who at sixteen
Bids fair to beat a meaner drum
Than any public star I've seen.
I leave the music I've become
Too deaf to hear or profit from.
I'd give him every hour I've known
Of Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven,
If he could give me back one tune.

You, Charles, must take what voice I can
Dredge up from years of broken rules.
License the beat, or let it scan,
But shun the literary fools
Whose verses reek of clichés and schools;
Nor let the poet fight the heart.
The only clean and honest tools
Are truth, good whisky, and good art . . .

And love, of course, which at the start
I meant to make the heroine
Of this homage *The Devil's Part*
Set off in France. Ah, *cher Villon*,
They tell me that my woman's tongue
Must dredge my womb to find its root.
That verse in the masculine
Is the only way to find it.

I'd rather be a pagan sucked
At some outlandish creed, absurd,
Than be indubitably fucked
By wild defects of sex and race.
The devil's fart is from his face.
I praise some *patria mea* - odd,
For it's a state but not a place -
I call it "Listening for God".

This haunts me - this profound belief
That what's between us and you makes
In this Anatomy of Grief
Is selfishness in all its veils.
I think of Gillian in Wales,
Of Jeremy, of Robert Wall,
Of Frances Horowitz's trials;
God spare them equally my hell.

To Caroline, my daughter, who's
A quarter century to my half,
I leave my hard-won stoic views,
My silliness, to make her laugh;
Also this three-line epitaph:
Here lies a mother who, in flame
Of life, lost all its grain. O chaff
Be charitable to her name.

To my good and loyal Guinness, this:
A bouquet of assorted sticks
That connoisseur of canine piss
Can take on wet, olfactory walks.
To both my cats, a furry box
Of heart-and-kidney flavoured spice.
Also my conscience, so those crooks
Won't catch my friends, the birds and mice.

To all my students in this age
Of terror masked as arrogance
When self-regarding verbiage
Is mostly personal defence,
I leave my tender deference
To poets older than the Bomb
Who temper grief with assonance
And wise, if dearly paid for, calm.

Still thriving in the English rain
Are Annes the Oxford angels keep.
Both Peter Levi and John Wain
Can tell a poet from a sheep.
If Yeats and Dylan from their sleep
Could rise, with Auden, to renew
The talk they wanted to repeat,
John Heath-Stubbs, they would come to you.

To Geoffrey Hill, awe and applause
For your great homage to Péguy.
You wring from tight prosodic laws
Such music, such profundity
The moving words forget to be
Pieces of language and become
Sacred as tools. So charity
Imbues with grace your finest poem.

To Tom, a river full of praise
That he may fish and find his trout
Symbolic, simple and ablaze
With cleansing blood to write about.
My Oxford, though, is not without
Its unwashed corpses, black with much
Suspicion, prejudice and doubt.
Wounds still too resident to touch.

Cambridge that gave me birth and name,
Magnet, unmerciful and strong,
In which I found girl-love, grown-shame,
In which I'll die, unless I'm wrong
About where human souls belong.
Twice you have been my home, but three
Is the number drawn and drawn
In my self-casting constantly.

And so, as Lady Memory
Undoes the clasps of her *armoire*,
Unfolds my soiled identity
And, piece by piece, my repertoire
Of gross mistakes - by which we are
Defined and moulded by the Muse -
I thank her that I've come this far
And have so little left to lose.

If I were Berryman I'd swear
That Villon visited my sleep.
But I'm no Bell's Heaulmière.
I don't think I'd be Villon's type.
Nevertheless, I think some deep
Affinity of drink or rhyme
(Plus how we rarely earn our keep)
Links poets in a ring of time.

The beat of everything the world
Affords, and therefore coins as grace -
Success etc. - is curtailed
By wild defects of sex and race.
The devil's fart is from his face.
I praise some *patria mea* - odd,
For it's a state but not a place -
I call it "Listening for God".

As for my eyes, my ears, my teeth,
The little lusts that live therein,
They can dissolve like salt beneath
The ink and paper of my skin.
For now and since the glacier's been
The boulder clay brings down the stones.
The tide pulls out, the tide pulls in.
So may a white sea wash my bones.

UP 115-150

Gravitating to the graveyard

John Lucas

ANDREW SANDERS
Charles Dickens Reurrectionist
238pp. Macmillan. £17.50.
0 353 30727 5

"Death is the trigger of the literary man's biggest gun," Empson famously remarked and Dickens would probably have agreed with him. Indeed, his fiction may seem to us overmuch possessed by the "distinguished thing". But then death, and especially untimely or unlooked-for death, was a vividly present fact of Victorian life, and novels that dealt with contemporary society were required to be true-to-death, so to say. In his essay on "Civilization," Mill noted that

"To most people in easy circumstances, any pain (except accident, disease or emotional disturbance) is rather a thing known of than actually experienced. This is much more emphatically true in the more refined classes, and as refinement advances: for it is in keeping as far as possible out of sight, not actual pain, but all that can be offensive or disagreeable to the most sensitive person, that refinement exists."

But no matter how refined you might be, death was always within sight. Nothing brought the Victorian family together like the death of one of its members. Besides, death was a mystery that could strike anyone, anywhere, at any time. It is therefore absurd to imagine, as some commentators have done, that untimely death in Dickens's novels can be sufficiently explained by the trauma he suffered over the sudden death of his young sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth. Fatal diseases were all around, as Andrew Sanders points out in the opening chapter of his study of Dickens's interest in death, and even among the well-to-do there were child deaths on a scale we can scarcely imagine. Dickens makes good imaginative use of the fact that nobody was very sure of what caused such diseases and that the remedies usually failed. In his novels, early death often becomes a powerful metaphor of emotionally starved or insufficient lives. The death of Paul Dombey, for example, tells us infinitely more about

Dombey's notion of destiny, his frozen rectitude and fear of love, than it does about the inadequacies of Victorian medicine.

The high mortality rates also had much to do with the conditions in which the majority of city-dwellers were forced to live. Dickens makes less of this than Elizabeth Gaskell, but the death of Jo in *Bleak House* is an unforgettable tour-de-force, impressive both for the colossal energy of his writing about the death itself and for the precise anger with which Dickens turns on "Your majesty", and those who appear to sanction or accept such conditions. City life breeds an atomistic society, terrifying in its anonymity, its lack of community relationships. City deaths can therefore become the token of strictly anonymous, because unknowable and unknown, existences. To die alone has a new, horrific resonance in Dickens's novels, as the death of Nemo suggests. Moreover, such a death is literally unmarked. The body is thrown into a pauper's grave, and city burial grounds, over-loaded with half-rotting corpses which have constantly to be tampered down to make room for others, stink of decay, unhouse bones and the ways of rats. It is all there in *Bleak House*.

Elsewhere in the novels Dickens relishes his loathing of that inevitable growth-industry of Victorian times, the undertaker's business, with its creep and crepe, paid mourners, joyless pretence at ceremony, would-be pomp and respectability. Dr Sanders has a good section on Dickens's savage denigration of funeral "gammies", although he rather neglects to account for the fact that Dickens clearly enjoyed inventing characters such as Mould and Sowerberry. This is perhaps because he is keen to argue that Dickens was a good Christian and therefore wished to place the meaning of death within the Christian scheme of things. Here, I begin to feel rather blank. Dickens is clearly not to be identified with an Epicurean or Patrician view of death. It could not be for him the Mother of Beauty. And although he might have agreed with Forster that death destroys a man but the idea of death saves him, he cannot be claimed for a liberal humanist outlook, since he had what no liberal humanist can have, a powerful sense of evil.

Yet Dickens's Christianity, in spite of being, or perhaps because of being vehemently expressed, always seems to me a kind of despairing good-heartedness. "I exhort my dear children humbly to try to guide themselves by the teaching of the New Testament in its broad spirit, and to put no faith in any man's narrow construction of its letter here and there." One can imagine Jowett nodding approval over that passage from Dickens's will, but then, as has often enough been pointed out, Jowett's Broad Church movement is so wide as to defeat sensible definition. Sanders says that Dickens disliked narrow sectarianism and it is true, he did, and he was often very funny at its expense. (Unfairly so, according to "Valentine Cunningham.") But he also had a contempt for speculative thought which at its worst comes close to rivaling Kingsley's philistine bluster. I cannot see that Christianity is either a subtle or a significant element in his novels, and I do not think it much affects his treatment of death. Sanders disagrees. Dickens "seems to have regarded as essential [for death-bed scenes]: hope, comfort, and room for repentance." Well, yes, but leaving aside the question of whether these constitute a specifically Christian view of the matter there is the fact, which Sanders himself importantly establishes, that "the religiously charged death-bed, used as a moral invention of the Victorians. Even its exploitation in evangelical tracts, lectical lantern-slides, popular ballads, and mawkish sentimental poetry shows something of a continuity with the previous century." Dickens does not always renovate a tradition he inherits, and I would say that the hope, comfort and room for repentance which he puts into some of his death-bed scenes often feels routine or to be a baffled and perhaps baffling attempt to force significance onto them.

This is not to deny that he was preoccupied with death. It is, however, to say that the absorption of artists in whatever feeds their art cannot always be explained in a manner that will satisfy the pure-hearted. Dickens protested against public executions, but he witnessed one. So did Hardy, and, as Sanders remarks, Hardy saw nothing odd in taking his newly-married wife on a visit to the Paris Morgue where Dickens had been a

frequent visitor. On one of his visits Dickens records how "I was attracted in, to see an old man lying all alone on his cold bed, with a tap of water turned on over his grey hair, and running, drip, drip, drip down his wretched face until it got to the corner of his mouth, where it took a turn, and made him look silly". Sanders comments on this that Dickens "seems to have considered it perfectly acceptable to both divert and chill his readers with such meditations on mortality". But in the passage in question Dickens is *not* meditating, he is observing, and the observation is a good deal more vivid than the meditations on death which he customarily provides in his novels and which I will agree are dressed up in loose, Christian language. (Just as Browning's study of the suicides in his great poem "Apparent Failure", which is also set in the Paris Morgue, is a good deal more vivid than the deliberately trite meditation with which the poem ends.) Dickens seems to have taken his death-bed meditations very seriously and he was pleased when others were comforted by his words. Yet he valuably emerges from the routine of tradition when he focuses on the dead body and its surroundings, and I cannot see anything particularly Christian about the ways he does that. Sanders says that one of the messages of Dickens's concern with death is that "life must go on". Never mind must, it

does. That is why about suffering they were never wrong, the old masters.

There is, however, the matter of dying. It is not, I think, one where Dickens often shows to advantage. As Sanders justly remarks, Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilyich* is scarcely paralleled in the literature of Western Europe in the nineteenth century, for it examines the process of dying from the point of view of the dying man rather than from that of the bystanders at the death-bed. To say that is to hint at what is wrong or anyway limited in Dickens's handling of death. Not always: one of the greatest moments in his fiction has to do with the dying Mrs Skewton, a woman whose ruthless egotism prohibits any possibility of imaginative vision, so that when she is wheeled down to the sea she observes only "a vast desolation between earth and sky". Yet Dickens more readily pretends to examine the process of dying in children, and these scenes and their main protagonists are lavishly stuffed with the kinds of thoughts, reflections and homiletic remarks that call to mind the writings of Hannah More. As such they are an offence against the true functioning of imagination and I can understand why Oscar Wilde thought that he must have a heart of stone who can read of the death of Little Nell without laughing.

Decidedly undecidable

Richard Brown

BERNARD BENSTOCK (Editor)

The Seventh of Joyce
267pp. Brighton: Harvester. £25.
0 7108 0443 1

In one of the more Wildean moments of Joyce's otherwise intensely insouciant *Exiles* Robert Hand makes this epigrammatic distinction between two types of statues: "the statue which says: *How shall I get down?* and the other kind... the statue which says: *In my time the downhill was so high.*" If academic publications may be classified according to these categories, without any disrespect, then this volume of essays serves the function of the latter kind of statue.

It is a collection of papers delivered at the Seventh International Joyce Symposium held in Zurich in 1979 and, as such, offers an indication of the state of Joycean academic progress at that other kind... the state of the art. The book has ten sections each containing four short essays and suggests a lively range of approaches to the texts in question. Contributors address themselves to questions of great generality, such as "Joyce and Recent Narrative Theory"; they make literary comparisons between Joyce and Beckett and Joyce and Faulkner; there are discussions of the relationships between Joyce and Freud and Joyce and Modern Science and thematic approaches, such as "Joyce and Judaism" and "Joyce and Sex".

Even when the essayists apply themselves to particular problems the heterogeneity of their interests is apparent. Three papers offered in explication of a single passage of *Finnegans Wake* may serve as examples here. The first opens: "the encounter of ECE and the Cad is that of the Father and Son"; the second has it that: "the passage begins with a matrix of woman/mother allied to language" and the third (as if from a different planet) asks: "What are the historical elements immediately implicit in the context of this passage?" "Explication has many faces but a single purpose, to produce an increase of understanding," claims the "chair person" of this "workshop", leaving us to wonder if that "increase" is, or should be, of a quantitative or of a qualitative kind.

J. Hills Miller, the most distinguished non-Joycean contributor, whose paper at the Symposium itself played elaborately with the term "anastomosis", is represented here by a much shorter

piece on the relationship between Joyce and literary theory. His argument brushes with *Ulysses* at one point, referring to Stephen Dedalus crushing the shells on the beach at Sandymount. Miller "would like to know whether, for Joyce, those shells, the traces of history, are the remaining signs of some heaven of archetypes or whether the reading makes them signs and they are in themselves more gross earth and 'heaps of dead language'." "Nothing could be more important than to decide about this," he is alarmingly aware. Those readers who despair of ever reaching the end of *Ulysses* if they need to apply to original, abstract and subtle an attention to every one of its many thousands of words may take some succour from his conclusion that such questions "may, after all, be undecidable".

Though there are essays (like Jean Kimball's refreshing account of Joyce's use of Freud) which add to our knowledge of Joyce's writings in a traditional way, many in this collection endorse Hills Miller's insistence on "undecidability", even if they do not choose to use the term. Thus on the "panels" which attempted to deal specifically with interpretations of *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*, there seem to be as many voices which question abstractly the possibility of interpretation as there are those who try to put it into practice. Philip Herring has a particularly interesting account of those characteristics of language in *Dubliners* which seem to sustain such a vast number of possible psycho-allegorical readings. Essays on Joyce and Beckett and Joyce and Faulkner likewise choose to conduct themselves as discussions of authorial omphaloskepticism or narrative self-generation as often as they choose to deal with specific historical or critical connections between the authors' works.

There is an enthusiasm for new approaches which is both attractive and characteristic of the event. The brevity and generality of many of the papers may not always seem well suited to book-style presentation, but the *Seventh of Joyce* at least offers an introduction to the kind of genuinely open and often highly productive exchange that can take place at such gatherings. Despite the fact, then, that it appears more than three years after the occasion, that many of the papers have been re-shaped and re-ordered and that (despite claims to be "international") all but two of the contributors are Americans, it is a moment in the history of Joyce studies and as a record of an academic exchange that his book must be valued. Within these limits the editor and publishers have made an attractively produced and worthwhile book.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Leave it to the experts

Zygmunt Bauman

WILLIAM OUTHWAITE
Concept Formation in Social Science
200pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£12.50.
0 7100 9195 8

Few natural scientists spend sleepless nights worrying about the rules which govern the formation of their concepts; quite a few social scientists, and their philosopher friends, do. Such a strikingly different degree of concern about what, by all accounts, is one of the major activities of all scientists, is intriguing and invites an explanation.

Of such explanations, indeed, there is not short in our century. All agree on the obvious: time and effort devoted to the solution of a problem tend to grow with the latter's complexity, hence the fascination of social scientists with the way their concepts are formed surely reflects the greater difficulty that they encounter in performing the task common to all sciences. Apart from this well-known commonsensical point, however, the explanations differ widely. Most of them may be assigned to one of two broad classes: explanatory in which point to the peculiarity of the object of social-scientific study, its "complexity", whatever this might mean; its "meaning-saturation"; its "subjectivity", or dependence on individual meanings, definitions of situations, cultural values, etc.; its inaccessibility to normal scientific verification procedures, particularly experimentation; and so on; and explanations which focus on the peculiarity of social scientists themselves and their collective endeavour - on either their ambiguous status as being simultaneously both "in" and "out" of the society they study, or on the "immaturity" of their science, which may be overcome, depending on the appropriate efforts being made.

William Outhwaite's book falls, by and large, into the second category, though the author is well aware of the other types of argument and surveys with a truly amazing facility the whole of the century-long discussion. It is Outhwaite's firmly held belief that the notorious absence of a universally

accepted conceptual core in social science, and one commonly agreed standards by which such core-concepts could be selected, has been engendered in no small measure by confusion as to the exact epistemological status of social-scientific concepts; and that the resulting dismay could be largely rectified, if only social scientists were to embrace the right philosophy of science and recognize the true nature of scientific concepts.

In about 150 pages of basic text (and almost half that number of detailed footnotes) Outhwaite compresses a breath-taking amount of information about the explicit and implicit philosophies which vie for influence over social-scientific practice. Very little of importance has been omitted and the book will certainly be used for years to come as an up-to-date, comprehensive source of reference to philosophical controversies in contemporary social sciences. The major tenets and tacit premises of the main philosophical contenders (positivism and phenomenology) are thoroughly examined and systematically presented, and their inherent limitations and sometimes creative, sometimes incapacitating contradictions convincingly exposed.

Outhwaite himself spurns both positivism and the phenomenological inspired philosophies of social science, since "neither of these alternatives allows an escape from relativism". If, indeed, sciences themselves constitute their object domain, and if theoretical knowledge is a part of human practice in general, then "it becomes vital that we have the 'right' concepts and theories". Reconciling oneself to the inevitability of relativism, or - worse still - celebrating the intrinsic relativism of all social knowledge, would be tantamount to a surrender of social-scientific responsibility. This is one possibility Outhwaite will not accept and it was the very desire to state it off which inspired the time-consuming research project of which this book is the impressive product.

For his guides Outhwaite has chosen a recent version of rationalism as represented in the work of Martin Heidegger and Deryck Beyleveld, and above all the realist theory of science expounded in an influential book by Roy Bhaskar. Realism, naturalism and rationalism are, in Outhwaite's view,

the only, even if they are not perfect, weapons we can (and should) employ in combating the demon of relativism which hides in the positivist and hermeneutical closets. If social knowledge is ever to raise itself to the status of a science, it must symbolically refuse to accept its own relativism. Instead, it must embrace, as its heuristic principles, precepts incorporated in the rationalist-realist model of science; such as that definitions should attempt to capture in words the real essences of things; that things exist and act independently of our descriptions; that rationality assumptions are essential to social science; that those theories should be preferred which can explain more; etc.

The case Outhwaite makes for the practicality of such principles and the feasibility of applying them to the objects of social-scientific inquiry, in spite of their notorious idiosyncrasies, is strong and convincing. What is much less convincing, unfortunately, is his hope that paying homage in this way to the philosophical creed which such principles manifest will go some way towards making sociology and its adjacent disciplines into a "normal science". The hope would be warranted, were the internal divisions, the lack of cumulative laws, the theoretical disarray and other notorious peculiarities of the social sciences attributable solely to the special traits of their object or, better still, to the philosophical ignorance of their practitioners. But is this the case?

Max Weber once wrote that each science "must want to go" beyond daily experience, "for this is precisely the basis of its right to exist as a science". Gaston Bachelard spoke of the "epistemological break" with common sense which is the birthmark of science - the break which occurs once scientific books no longer start by referring to a commonly accessible experience, but instead by invoking a specialist theory or concept unknown in everyday language or "non-specialist" thought. Foucault includes among the crucial defining attributes of any "discursive formation" underlying the continuity of science, the "sites" from which statements must be made if they are to be acknowledged as "scientifically relevant".

What sets scientific knowledge apart from ordinary thinking is not so much a distinctive subject-matter or a peculiar

methodology, as the distanciation of science from universally accessible, commonsensical experience. Science is thus autonomous. It sustains unchallenged the collective authority of specialist knowledge by rendering it impervious to non-specialist intervention. One could, symbolically, draw modern science to the moment when Galileo put a telescope between his eye and the sun - and thus entered a field of experience which the naked, non-specialist eye cannot penetrate. It is a long way from the sun-spots which Galileo saw through his primitive optical tube and the splashes on the screen of the cyclotron which constitute the experience processed by today's nuclear physics, but it is a way that has led consistently in the same direction: away from the "form of life" one which the layman can claim competence.

One can argue that the notorious inability of social science to set its own house in order (as defined by the standards of modern science) is ultimately founded not so much on the peculiarity of its object or the philosophical backwardness of its practitioners, as on its distinct social status (a fact only too easily concealed by the similarity of institutional status between social and natural sciences within universities). Social science, as it were, never truly entered on the road along which the natural sciences have travelled. A reputable social scientist tries to validate his judgments by reference to an experience much wider than his ordinary daily practice may supply. Experience he processes remains qualitatively identical with the one accessible in principle to any member of society. The privileged status of social-scientific wisdom is not, therefore, unproblematically assured by the collective monopoly of social scientists over the "universe of facts" they study. They thus find it difficult to speak with an authority comparable to that of natural scientists.

No wonder, therefore, that they

should set such store by their rules of concept-formation and philosophical grounding, since in social science rules are called on to carry a responsibility unheard of elsewhere: to validate an authority which other scientists derive from their control over the realm of experience within which, and of which, their judgments are forged.

Can methodology, on its own, however, generate the needed authority? Outhwaite does not confront this critical question. Perhaps the major weakness of his book is that it is itself so un-sociological in its diagnoses, prescriptions and hopes. Viewed sociologically, the long, inconclusive methodological debate in and around social science does not present itself as a story of errors and blunders, to be rectified by an injection of sound philosophical thinking. Has the unending search not been prompted rather by a continuous situation of cognitive dissonance (speaking with "expert authority" is a mark of the scientist; but our statements as social scientists continue to be contested - with success - from quarters we do not recognize as expert), and by the resolve to draw a clear and universally respected line dividing expert knowledge from mere opinion? If this is our objective, then Neurath's programme for an artificial language is the only conceivable strategy of radical separation between the two. Its failure exposed the only too often forgotten truth that language on its own cannot generate an autonomous "form of life", unless it is grounded in a self-contained practice.

Would the precepts of realist philosophy, however commendable and well attuned to a scientific conscience and ambition, fare any better? As Wittgenstein dependently wrote, "philosophy leaves everything as it is", and in a moment of similar premonition, Outhwaite writes: "(It) is not clear that their [realist philosophers'] solutions are more than verbal ones". Indeed.

Quintessentially honest

John Thompson

J. R. HAMMOND

A George Orwell Companion: A guide to the novels, documentaries and essays
278pp. Macmillan, £20.
0 353 28668 5

Nineteen Eighty-Four is a retrospective novel; Orwell thought that any other sort could not properly be written: "It is very unlikely that any novel, i.e. worth reading, would ever be set back less than three years at least." On its publication he tried to discourage futurist interpretations.

But the slender connection between *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and 1984 is to supply the reason for the coming year of celebration, which offers threats and promises for Orwell studies. A consolidation of the Orwell mythology is threatening. We are likely to hear more, from some celebrants, of Orwell as the man who saw the folly of the Left from the Left and meant to hand over, as Frederic Warburg thought he might, "a cool million votes to the Conservative party". This is a major error; Orwell was surprised and distressed by the "very shame-making publicity" given *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by the American Right, which assumed the British Labour Party was under attack.

We may be told too, as J. R. Hammond tells us in his *George Orwell Companion* - largely a book of biographical summary and topographical criticism - that Orwell was "quintessentially English" despite Raymond Williams's persuasive view of him as an Englishman only by affiliation. Was

Orwell "quintessentially English" in his conscientious acquisition of native languages when a policeman in Burma? Or in his involvement with the International Literary activity in Paris in the 1920s, idealizing Joyce for breaking up the "narrow padded world" of Georgian English literary endeavour? Or in his shattering the responsibility of an international socialist in Spain and calling for a "Socialist United States of Europe"?

The Orwell mythology is compounded from selections: those of Orwell himself, his widow, his critics, and most especially his readers. Orwell sometimes told us only what he thought we should know; his widow and editor withheld material that would have diversified our appreciation of him. Many critics have dealt obsessively with only a limited number of passages and ideas, while readers commonly restrict their attentions to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*. Some tidy judgments have been made and are ready for disruption. Thus the preface for 1984 is Peter Davison's edition of the complete corpus.

Orwell was an absorbent and synthetic writer and the sources of his ideas, the connective points between his huge reading and derivative writings, still need research. Hammond's contribution is an intimate knowledge of H. O. Wells. Orwell could express his debt to Wells only as a son to a father and, bizarrely, as a fictional character to his author: "Is it not a sort of parricide for a person of my age (thirty-eight) to find fault with H. O. Wells? Thinking people who were born about the beginning of this century are in some sense Wells's own creation." Orwell is attending to his ideological nativity, identifying himself

as a child of his time. Even so, it is more important to Hammond's thesis to present Orwell as himself a father: "seminal" is a word to which he continually returns.

Properly understood it is a good perspective. Anthony Burgess's 1983 and Kingsley Amis's *Russian Hide and Seek* are extensions in a fabulous tradition from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, just as Orwell's novel was from Wells's *When the Sleeper Wakes* and Zamyatin's *We*. But the probability is that Orwell's contribution to the culture of 1984 will be generally perceived as a moral one.

In a war-time essay, "Writers and Society", Cyril Connolly suggested an additional censor, a Word Controller, who would draw up an Index of "forbidden clichés with a scale of fines". The Controller would soon discover, Connolly tells us, "that there is a connection between the rubbish written... and the thoughts of people, and he would endeavour to use his censorship of words in such a way as to affect the ideas behind them, or rather, he would give priority to statements of fact over abstractions". Orwell's later, kindred, essay "Politics and the English Language", remarks Connolly's point: "the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts." The literary-world slovenliness of "honest", Orwell most relied on in some departments of Orwell criticism, is apparent: facile, always available as an alternative to taking thought or looking at the text. Perhaps, to use an expression of Orwell's, it can be leered out of print for a while, together with "quixotic", "prophetic", "salutary", "virtuous", "generously angry" and, of course, "quintessentially English".

Between factory and family

Phyllis Willmott

MARILYN PORTER
Home, Work and Class
Classlessness
190pp. Manchester University Press.
£10.50.
0 7190 0899 9

Ten years ago the author, a Marxist feminist, carried out a research project in Bristol which aimed to "examine how the sexual division of labour operated on a material and ideologically - in the lives of twenty-five working-class couples living and working in Britain in the early 1970s". It is not clear why it has taken so long to prepare and publish this modest study, but it could be partly, as others have found, that making sense of extensive tape-recorded interviews can prove an overwhelming task. Although circumstances have changed a great deal since the early 1970s, a time when unemployment was by today's standards low, the long delay does not greatly matter. This is because the empirical material was, for the author, primarily a means of coming to grips with such theoretical questions as "how the influence of ideas, how working-class people meet the conflicts of life in a capitalist society, how women cope with a male-dominated

with "productive work and productive workers". Today, both men and women spend more time in their lives outside work than in it, but this part of life has figured barely at all; as Marilyn Porter rightly says, "in Marxist sociological studies... Her research investigated this neglected area, especially looking at the relationship of wives to the 'productive work' of their husbands."

The author was fortunate in finding a medium-sized firm in Bristol which was not only willing to give her free access to both factory and workers, but happened to have a feminist in its staff going on at the time. This proved to be a useful point of reference for the kind of questions she had in mind. The firm, which Porter calls Hammers Ltd, made fibre-board boxes. The work of the men she interviewed was semi-skilled, routine and monotonous; there was a shift-work system, and pay was low. Although at least half of the wives had part-time jobs - and in this sense were "productive workers" themselves - they were in their own eyes primarily occupied in looking after their homes and dependent children. The author shared their view. To working-class women, she says, work outside the home is always secondary. "Even when women are working full-time, they are 'second-class' in their own homes, their responsibilities, they still regard themselves - and are regarded - as not primarily in the labour market."

In the course of the study, as well as becoming familiar with the factory and its staff at all levels, Porter interviewed each of the twenty-five men in her sample while they were at work. She

where she went to interview their wives separately. As others have found, the men earned more than enjoyed their actual work, and the centre of life for both them and their wives proved to be home and family. What is less familiar is that she found that the wives as much as possible ignored the work side of their husbands' lives. They took an interest in pay, shift work and, to a lesser extent, work safety (all of which could affect directly the family), but were not interested in matters like work supervision, working conditions or trade unionism. It follows that their attitudes to the things which are most ambivalent and most often hostile. Generous use of excerpts from the tape-recordings brings to life the views of the men and women whom the author interviewed - and whom she clearly grew to respect and like, despite their political apathy.

As a feminist, Porter was struck by "the potential" of the working-class wives. The way ahead, she concludes, is to organize women over issues which do concern them - these being things like prices, and bureaucracy or other defects in housing, health and social welfare services. The resources of anger and confidence were there. What lay between (the wives) and action was the privatization of the family and the failure of working-class organizations, she asserts. But in her efforts to resolve the conflict between Marxism and feminism she has been led to ignore the evidence of the interviews she has so painstakingly recorded. Disaffected with trade unionism, devoted to home life, these working-class wives were surely those least likely to embrace any neo-Marxism as the route to their own - or society's - liberation.

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Sanctioning the sinners

Peter Godman

ALLEN J. FRANTZEN

The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England
238pp. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. \$27.50.
0 8135 0955 6

"It is hard to see how anyone could busy himself with such literature and not be the worse for it", wrote Charles Plummer in his otherwise splendid edition of Bede, and his view of the medieval penitentials has been shared even by the editors of these alarmingly explicit works. The Latin texts of the medieval Irish penitentials are available in English translation but the parts of the vernacular, Old Irish penitential which deal with adultery, incest and homosexuality have been translated into Latin. The decent obscurity of a learned language proved too indecent for the distinguished editor of Finnian's Penitential, who rendered a pungent Latin expression for anal intercourse by the embarrassed euphemism "practising homosexuality". The censorious prescriptions of the medieval church have themselves been conserved by scholars who have worked on these texts and most medievalists have chosen to steer clear of them, perhaps out of concern with their morals. Allen Frantzen has busied himself with the literature of medieval penance, and emerged apparently unscathed, with this lively and well-informed survey of what the Anglo-Saxons, Irishmen and Franks of the early Middle Ages thought about a subject which has attracted so much modern prejudice.

Penance, as embodied in the document known as the penitential, is distinguished early in this book from repentance, a state of mind and of conscience. Frantzen thereby eschews vague speculation on the nature of early medieval spirituality, the character of penitents or their relations with their priests. Anglo-Saxon literature of penance is examined instead from the standpoint of the administrators to whom the penitentials provide access, and England appears at the centre of a broad perspective which extends to the Continent and to Ireland. The penitentials are reference books of possible transgressions, not records of real confessions; they reflect the position of the judge, not that of the accused; and they vary in form and content according to their dates and places of origin. None the less, these modest attempts to lend coherence to the diverse practices of medieval divinity possess a coherent literary history of their own.

The story begins in Ireland, where the penitential first appears as a product of missionary zeal, broader and harsher in its prescriptions for conduct than the monastic rule, and meant not only for monks. Frantzen considers the gradual extension of monastic power, to which features of the Irish penitentials bear witness, together with the qualified accommodation of secular law in the handbooks of penance, and he rebuts the charges of casuistry and obscurantism so often levelled against them. There are points, however, where Frantzen's attempt to argue for the sweet reasonableness of these texts appears a little strained. The distinction, formulated in Cummean's

penitential, between the monk who, "if he expresses his anger with pallor or flush or tremor, yet remains silent, shall go for a day on bread and water" and the other monk who "merely feels incensed in his mind, [who] shall make satisfaction to him who has incensed him" may have seemed hazy to the brother on bread and water. Frantzen contends that the extremes of Irish asceticism, as described in hagiography, are not distinctive of penitential practice, but the Irish clerics found guilty of manslaughter who had chosen to commute their penance cannot but have recalled the direct horrors in the Lives of the saints as they spent the night prescribed by *The Old Irish Table of Commutations* with a dead body or on nettles and pushbells.

If the origins of the Irish penitential lay in the practice of private penance, the earliest Anglo-Saxon penitential, ascribed to archbishop Theodore, was the work of a busy ecclesiastical administrator concerned to foster closer connections between lay society and the Church. Frantzen examines the links between the penitentials and secular law, and he considers the role of confessional prayers in the development of Anglo-Saxon penitential tradition. Certain texts which are important in this development, such as the penitentials attributed to Bede and to archbishop Egbert of York, are considered only briefly, although Frantzen refers his readers to a forthcoming article which will presumably fill in some of these gaps. Other works, such as the confessional prayers ascribed to Alcuin, are granted a prominence hardly warranted by their doubtful authenticity. Frantzen is on firmer ground in the ninth century, when

protests were raised against some of the vague attributions he continues to countenance, and he discusses with style and clarity the emergence of carefully planned and expanded handbooks of penance among the Franks.

The Frankish reforms served as a model to the Anglo-Saxons of the ninth and tenth centuries who adapted and synthesized texts produced on the Continent. The dual system of private penance for private sins and of public penance for public offences was inherited by the Anglo-Saxons from their Carolingian masters; authors such as Ælfric and Wulfstan instructed priests in both the theory and the practice of penance; and a complete penitential system was worked out in the vernacular language intelligible to clergy and laity alike. The Old English homilies, handbooks and prayers are the didactic tools with which the vision of these far-sighted reformers was hewn into reality.

The impact of the penitential tradition on Old English poetry is the subject of the most penetrating chapter

in the book. Frantzen offers a brisk and justly critical survey of the body of Old English verse often described as penitential, and in such an unassuming text as Cynewulf's *Juliana* he discovers a plausible, if limited, irony. The differences between wisdom poetry and penitential verse are discussed with sensitivity and insight: self-revelation, in the famous poem misleadingly called *Wanderer*, is avoided because it entails penance in the illusory consolations of a transient world, whereas in the penitential system self-revelation buys security. The stoicism of *The Wanderer* "dignifies circumstances which poems about penance seek to transcend". In an epilogue Frantzen looks ahead to the work which remains to be done in this fertile, if forbidding field which his own book has done so much to open up. While the detail and some of the conclusions of *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* are unlikely to command unquestioning acceptance, this fresh and intelligent examination removes any excuse for regarding the study of penitential literature as a penance.

Naming the knights

A. Groos

D. H. Green

The Art of Recognition in Wolfram's *Parzival*
377pp. Cambridge University Press.
0 521 24500 1

Wolfram von Eschenbach seems finally to be winning general recognition as the most important narrative poet between Virgil and Dante. Familiarity in English-speaking countries with this major figure in the florescence of German literature around 1200 is a relatively late phenomenon. Until recently, ignorance could be attributed to lack of translations, and sometimes to their existence. This is no longer the case. *Parzival* is now available in two good prose translations and a new rendition of *Willehalm* is scheduled to appear next year.

While most of Wolfram's works have slowly been made accessible to the general reading public, scholars have produced several thousand books and articles about them since 1945 alone. A surprising number of the best have been written by British scholars, and much of it published by the Cambridge University Press, whose publication policies are as exemplary as its prices are exorbitant. D. H. Green has recently enriched scholarship on romance, especially *Parzival*, with numerous articles and three books (one with L. P. Johnson). Most are representative of major concerns in British Wolfram scholarship, which tends to focus on thematic and narrative problems.

The present volume derives its inspiration from the episodic structure of romance and the ways in which the hero's progression from encounter to encounter can be described. The early masters of Arthurian romance, Chrétien de Troyes and Hartmann von Aue, usually present an episode so that the participants recognize each other and are identified by the narrator, exploiting the possibilities inherent in non-recognition only on isolated occasions. Wolfram, on the other hand, elevates the problem of recognition to a major concern of his work. Indeed, it sometimes seems as if the narrator interlaces the encounters of his 222 named characters in such a way that recognition of them and their consanguineal relationships is late or inaccurate, or both.

Green begins his study with a discussion of "possibilities" inherent in the problem of recognition. Since the narrator rattles the information available both to his characters and his audience, he forces both to undertake the intellectual work of figuring out the intricate workings of his human universe. Sometimes the quest proceeds via parallel tracks, for example, when the narrator does not

name a figure until the hero recognizes him. On some occasions, as with Gawain, a figure in the romance knows far more than the audience is allowed to perceive; where as in others, as with Parzival, the audience knows more than the figure, although not everything it should. The dominant feature of this technique is the revelation of names. Green's analysis reveals Wolfram to be a high priest of *anagnorisis* as well as one of the great name-droppers in literature.

The main body of the book is an analysis of recognition scenes from the beginning to the end of *Parzival*. The presentation of Gahmuret and Gawain, discussing how the former avoids the problem of recognition and the latter manipulates it, seems more interesting than the analysis of Parzival's more consequential problems, perhaps because Green and others have already pointed us towards reading the text in this manner, perhaps because no single approach does justice to the complexity and richness of Wolfram's main story. There is, however, a major advance in Green's analysis. One of his persistent concerns, uninvitingly designated "the medieval reception of *Parzival*", expands on an observation of S. M. Johnson that modern editions, with their footnotes and commentaries to assist the bewildered student, actually subvert the initial confusion and gradual enlightenment built into the work.

In enlightenment built into the work, a sense, Green's interpretation from the point of view of recognition deconstructs the scholarly apparatus surrounding *Parzival*, arguing for modern readers the adventure of the original, and suggesting what might unwittingly be labelled its medieval performance situation.

The final chapter, "Conclusions", presents a taxonomy of elements in the medieval perception of recognition. Since a knight in armour is cold in winter, hot in summer, and generally as anonymous as the task that has replaced him, it is not surprising to discover that Wolfram uses a number of realistic features, ranging from battered insignia to imminent darkness, to assist him in portraying the problems of recognition. The fact that this theme also has a spiritual component, Parzival's involvement in a gradual process of self-recognition - requires a digression into a twelfth-century theology and psychology. It judges scores the cumulative effect of recognition within the work. Scholars have long been puzzled over the absence of Parzival from much of the action in the second half of the romance, and disturbed by the fact that his final battles are inconclusive.

The compelling evidence of this book is that Parzival is precisely what Wolfram calls him in the prologue, a brave man, slowly wise, and that his progress lies not in feats of arms, but in learning that art of recognition.

Arthur Groos is a professor of German Literature at Cornell University.

John Hopkins's new novel, *The Right of the Pelican*, will be published shortly.

P. N. Johnson-Laird's *Mental Models* will be published later this year.

L. J. Jordanova is a lecturer in History at the University of Essex.

J. P. Kenyon's books include *Revolution Principles*, 1977, and *Stuart England*, 1978.

Harry Levin is currently the George Eastman Visiting Professor at Oxford.

Peter Lindehan is co-editor with Brian Tierney of *Authority and Power: A Festschrift for Walter Ullmann*, 1980.

John Lucas's *Romantic to Modern Literature: Essays and Ideas of Culture, 1750-1900* was published in 1982.

William Allingham (1842-89), Anglo-Irish poet: whereabouts of any manuscripts, letters or unusual printed works in public or private collections, for a bibliographical and biographical study.

Mark Samuels Lasser, 323 Kent Road, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903.

Czech-English verse translations: published or unpublished English translations sought; for possible inclusion in a bilingual anthology covering the period 1918-48, now in preparation.

A. French, Department of Classics, University of Adelaide, South Australia.

Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), sculptor: biographical information, eg. reminiscences by those who sat for portraits or who modelled for him, whereabouts of sculpture, drawings, letters etc. for a forthcoming study and catalogue of his work.

Evelyn Silber, Department of Fine Art, Birmingham City Art Gallery, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3DH.

William Johnson Temple, Rector of Marnhead and Vicar of St Gluvias (1739-96): whereabouts of letters and papers still in private hands, or of any portraits, either of himself, or of his wife Anne; or of his daughter Anne (Mrs Charles Powell) for the Yale edition of his correspondence, with James Boswell. Also, for the same project, whereabouts of letters and papers, whether in public or private hands.

Among this week's contributors

ZIONIST BAUMAN is the author of *Memories of Class: The pre-history and life of class*, 1982.

RONALD CARR's *English Fox Hunting* was published in 1976.

J. M. COCKING's *Proust: Collected Essays on the writer and his art* was published last year.

DAVID COLEGATE's novels include *From the City of the Sun*, 1979, and *The Shooting Party*, 1981.

PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR's books include *A Time of Gifts*, 1977.

DAVID FOTHERGILL's books include *Bedford of Fonthill*, 1979.

PAUL FRENCH is *The Observer's* film critic, and producer of *Critics' Forum* on Radio 3.

JOHN GAGE's edition of *The Collected Correspondence of J. M. W. Turner* appeared in 1980.

PETER GODMAN is the editor of *Alcuin: The Bishops, Kings and Saints of York*, 1983.

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JOHN LUCAS's *Romantic to Modern Literature: Essays and Ideas of Culture, 1750-1900* was published in 1982.

Information, please

CYRIL B. MILLS was Chairman and Joint Managing Director of Bertram Mills Circus from 1938 to 1966.

TOM PHILLIPS is the author of *A Humument: A Treatise of a Victorian Novel*, 1980.

ROY PORTER is a lecturer at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London.

S. S. PRAWER's *Heine's Jewish Comedy* will be published later this year.

HARLEY PRESTON is a Curator at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

D. D. RAPHAEL is Professor of Philosophy and Head of the Department of Humanities at Imperial College, London.

GRAHAM REYNOLDS's complete catalogue of the work of John Constable, 1817-1837, will be published next year.

KEITH ROBBINS's *The Eclipse of a Great Power: Modern Britain 1870-1975* was reviewed in the TLS earlier this year.

ANDREW SAINT is Architectural Editor of *The Survey* of London.

MICHAEL SCHMIDT is the editor of *Eleven British Poets*, 1981.

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